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Yesterday Was Mine

By *PRINCESS ANNE-MARIE CALLIMACHI*

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YESTERDAY WAS MINE

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For
Sacheverell and Georgia Sitwell
in affection and gratitude

Preface

THESE chapters concerning my life and times were not, in the beginning, written for publication. They are the outcome of anxious war days when I was living in England and time lay heavy on my hands. In that bombed fortress island there was little for me to do during one of the greatest periods of history. Through the default of my country, Roumania, then fighting on the wrong side, I was an enemy alien, granted generous hospitality and all freedoms—except the freedom to help.

Small wonder if, under the circumstances, my mind turned to the past. I relived in memory the carefree time of my youth, the time of horse-drawn carriages and oil lamps, of spacious Roumanian country houses and gay social life in Bucharest, with their lighthearted pleasures among quasi-feudal surroundings, to which I had been born. I remembered my unconventional education, the waltzing Vienna I loved, Rome, the scintillating pre-1914 Paris, my marriage and my babies, and many an incident of time gone by. From the past came pictures of figures who left their mark on history and others treasured only in my heart.

Such were the gay or nostalgic items of my fancy which became the subjects of fireside conversation with my English hosts. They would have remained only table talk but for a knowing friend's advice.

"Why not write it down?" he said. "It will occupy your time and may cure your nostalgia."

"Why not?" I thought, and began writing.

And then—ah, then—came the questioning. Had I anything valid to relate? What, really, in this iron time, could I say of the bygone years of peace, frivolity, and joy? I had always admired those capable of writing well, but when young I believed that writers should either be geniuses with a message for the world or talented journalists whose function was to explain the present. I knew I was neither. Nor did I even keep a diary, because setting down fresh facts on frozen, blank pages gave me a feeling of staleness. Life itself, enjoyable, violent, or mysterious, had always been preferable to the recording of life.

But there I was, living in the past, and the past suddenly seemed worth recording. So, summoning my memories, I started writing them down, without diaries or notes and, moreover, in a foreign idiom. If at times my English goes amiss I trust it will be excused on the latter ground. Dates and facts I have checked to the best of my knowledge; elsewhere I have trusted to a candid and rather reliable memory.

Thus I have, in the following pages, sung the melody of my youth, retracing my dazzled approach to art, the theater, and social life, mentioned places and people I loved or admired, and composed a patchwork of reminiscences and impressions which gave me so great a pleasure to set down that I hope it may be shared—at least partly—by the casual reader who picks up my book. To those of my age it may sound like an echo of a period that was the culmination of European civilization and of the gentle art of living—a period that ended in strife and bloody political upheavals. To younger readers my memories may be evocative of an obsolete world, already receding into the far-off past. Their eyes may see better and greater times—that I sincerely hope and believe—but they will never see exactly those I have witnessed.

Before me also is the vision of a new dawn, for those who do not look eagerly ahead are mentally dead, mere fossils among the ruins and regrets of their lives. Yet without doubt my generation has seen

the end of an era and has been vividly aware of history in the making. More political, economic, and social changes have occurred during the last five decades than perhaps in any similar span of years since the emergence of civilization along the Nile and Euphrates. And we have not yet seen the end.

The present book, however, deals only with the fairy tale of the beginning, which in our present telescoping of time and events may seem like a distant mirage of the age before World War I. Its publication involved another friend's initiative and help, this time in America, where I believe the world's future is now being determined, and where, it is good to know, some people still throw an amused and tolerant glance upon yesterday's vanities, which were mine.

ANNE-MARIE CALLIMACHI

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My dear Anne-Marie,

I am delighted to hear your memoirs are to be published. You will remember how pleased I was with the early installments of them. I recall how much I used to love reading your book, chapter by chapter, as you sent it to us. Now, it is an axiom that nearly every autobiography is worth reading. It can happen that even a dull life is almost as interesting to read about as an exciting one, but you have had anything but a dull life . . . !

You have a vivid gift of phrase; you are frank and amusing about yourself; and you are, certainly, one of the persons of the widest reading I have come across. With a wonderful gift of friendship, of which there is so much evidence in your pages!

I am sure many of your readers will be fascinated by your account of childhood in a Roumanian boyar family. Not quite a Russian background (though like that) but more Oriental, more tinged with the Turkish. How well I remember your chateau—Maneshti—with its Second Empire interiors (I recall you said it was largely furnished by Napoleon III's purveyor). And the excellence of the Roumanian cuisine, of which you have much to say. And the portraits of ancestors—not in wigs, but wearing turbans and long beards. And the painting of a boyar forbear by Liotard. The description of life in Bucharest is delightful, with its cosmopolitan atmosphere, yet so Roumanian! And then I loved your chapters on Vienna; and on Paris, and French society, and on the Russian ballets of Diaghilev, that great art movement of your times. I find, in writing this, that I want to reread your memoirs, all over again; and so, I think, will many of your readers. I can, most sincerely, recommend it to them.

Sacheverell Sitwell

Weston Hall
Towcester
Northamptonshire

Introducing Myself

THE sun was nearly setting. Beyond the wide garden gates the straight white road stretched, rigid and dry in the heavy evening heat. A passing cart raised clouds of yellowish dust, fringed with red and purple by the slanting sunbeams.

A small, low, lemon-colored carriage, drawn by a beautifully harnessed little gray donkey, who was led by a tall flunky in full postilion uniform, drew up to the doorway of the big house. A black-eyed, black-haired, button-nosed little girl dressed in white muslin, solemnly descended the front steps and entered the coach for her slow evening drive. Beside the carriage marched her English Nanny.

This very vague image, almost as blurred as faded photographs of the period, is the first one of myself reflected in the dimmed mirror of my memory. So vague in fact is this image that I cannot quite place it in space and time, yet so typical of my early childhood that, for long, I was known among the people of my generation as "the little girl in the donkey cart." To what extent my own memory is augmented by such remarks I cannot tell, for children's reminiscences consist of mysterious visions in which only occasional pictures emerge clearly out of a misty background. Therefore, acknowledging the gaps in my childish memories, I will tell my story as I now visualize it.

I was born over half a century ago in Bucharest, then a charming, semi-Oriental capital, composed of low rambling houses, set deep in

spacious gardens, and of poorly paved narrow streets seething with picturesque life, gaiety, and gossip, over which innumerable small churches and chapels, with round belfries and squat domes, seemed to extend their blessings. The town of my birth was a green, religious, smiling one.

The contrast between the simple native ways of the peasants and poorer classes and the "Paris-imitated" style of existence led by the class to which I belonged was not the only dual influence to preside over the first years of my life. Of these divergent influences I was to become very early aware.

Equally contrasting were our seasons, ranging from tropical heat to long icy winters; the violent temperament of the race mellowed by kindheartedness; and the two houses linked with my earliest memories. One was Maneshti, the ancient family seat, dignified and haunted in spite of modern alterations and repairs; the other our Bucharest villa, more bourgeois, even slightly nouveau riche in a late Victorian manner. Each of them typified the different strains of blood, one very old, the other recent, converging in my veins. I will have much to say of these two homes, which composed the solid background of my life and were still in my possession until the recent seizure of my country.

On my father's side, I descended from one of the oldest Roumanian families, mentioned in ancient chronicles ever since the beginning of my country's history. My ancestors were referred to in these old scripts as valiant, bloodthirsty warriors during the reconquest of the land in 1291 after nine hundred years of barbarian invasions and occupations, and later during the two centuries of pitiless wars against the Turkish conquerors.

My childish brain buzzed with tales and legends about those fierce soldiers. The walls of our country house were splashed with colorful, poorly painted scenes of those troubled times: pictures of plumed chieftains descending mountain rifts on fantastically harnessed white horses; of purple- and gold-clad medieval knights offering for a

priest's blessing the *yatagan* [Turkish saber], which had slain "as many heathens as are days in the year"; or of our forebear John Vacaresco, who was dragged to Constantinople in 1716 and beheaded near the fortress of Yedicule, in front of the Sultan, for refusing to deny his Christian faith and renounce his sovereign and brother-in-law, Prince Constantine Brancovan.

After the beginning of the eighteenth century my ancestors were described in Roumanian history books as cultured, wealthy, and influential members of the so-called "great boyar" class, being usually diplomats or writers—but when involved in politics, shrewd, and even at times dangerous, intriguers.

By the time of my birth, three generations of charming, reckless spendthrifts had taken their toll of the Vacaresco estates and heirlooms, and nothing would have remained of our possessions but for an equal number of moneyed marriages which had preserved something of our past splendors.

My great-grandfather Constantine (son of Theodore, nicknamed "The Thunderstorm") had inherited great wealth and had also married an heiress of French origin, Hélène de Linche, whose premature death had left him, when very young, free to indulge his maddest whims. He converted the better part of her fortune into cash and—packing loads of gold ducats alongside his mistress, his two children, valets, and maids into a specially built, large yellow coach—sallied abroad. He roamed Austria, Switzerland, France, and Italy for as many years as his funds lasted. On his return, he found his estates not only neglected but partly ruined by his trusted bailiffs, barely enough remaining to give my grandfather, Theodore, a perfect Prussian military education in the Cadets' School of Potsdam, near Berlin. His sister was promptly married to a rich upstart, who later became no less than regent of the realm.

Grandpapa Vacaresco learned nothing from his own father's experience. In spite of a brilliant career, he always got into debt and was a bad, unfaithful husband to my adored Granny, whom he made

thoroughly unhappy regardless of her sweet temper and deep, uncomplaining loyalty. I knew these things by childish instinct and could not help cordially disliking my grandfather, without even being grateful for the great care he took of my education and studies; for he was a genuinely cultured man. All I could see were his inbred looks, too fragile bone structure, and that thin waist on which he prided himself almost to his dying day. He was short, slim, dark, and, like almost all members of my family, shortsighted; and his monocle, always tightly riveted under his bushy left eyebrow, shifted his face into a continuous grimace like an uncanny, grinning mask. With its sallow complexion, small nose, and regular features, his face was hardened by a long, thin-lipped, cruel mouth which he sought to conceal under a little moustache and a short scraggy beard, which he early took to dyeing the most amazing, iridescent, black-blue color I ever saw. Where Grandpa got his beard dye I failed to discover, but it made him at times shine like an old bit of Spanish glazed pottery under a glaring sun. He eventually shaved this painful decoration for my personal benefit, I was told, but really because I had once disrespectfully said it might impair his chances as a belated Don Juan. With or without beard, he was very ugly, and his bad sight made him untidy and clumsy; the erect and cocky demeanor he assumed when made conscious of his diminutive height was ludicrous in one so apt to stumble.

Poor Grandpa Vacaresco! I detested him only because I worshiped my Granny, an angel and a saint, whose life story was as pure and simple as a mountain brook, yet similarly meandering and complicated because of the large naughty stones which kept hindering the straight course of its stream.

She was of Greek origin, as was my mother, although both were born and bred in Roumania. This was not at all unusual in my country, where a Greek influx had been almost continuous since 1718, when the Turkish Sultan, Suzerain of the Danubian Provinces, decided he could not trust the too independent Roumanian princes

and would rule these rebellious parts by the proxy of Greeks. These he chose among the inhabitants of the Byzantine Greek quarter of Constantinople, the Phanar, who belonged to the same faith as the Roumanians and were endowed with great political shrewdness. As reigning princes, courtiers, administrators, servants, or adventurers, for two hundred years this infiltration overwhelmed my country, accounting for the Greek alliances to be found in any Roumanian family, however purely Latin its first origin may have been.

Granny was short, rather plump, and although just in her early fifties when I first remember her (she was born in 1846), she had already settled into the appearance and manner of an aging lady, for such was the fashion of her day. Just a little silver mingled in her dark brown hair; her long, rather fleshy face was smooth with but a hint of a double chin. An arresting smile dwelt in her light brown eyes, divorced from the often serious expression of the well-outlined yet indifferent mouth which she never rouged, but whose lips parted on a double row of magnificent white teeth. Her great charm made one overlook her too large and long nose, and if in youth she had been considered attractive, it was mainly due to her grace and sweetness. At any age, when she smiled and began telling a story she was irresistible. I wish I had my Granny's gift as a storyteller. She used few words, yet they were so well chosen, so happily knit together, that a whole episode would appear and develop to the imagination, as the rapid sketch of a master sometimes conveys better, in a few quick strokes of his chalks, the life and movement of a scene than a too carefully finished picture.

Thus was brought to life for me her own mother H  l  ne Manesco (my great-grandmother) when in 1855 she had taken my Granny to school in Paris. I could clearly see H  l  ne, this fresh, pleasingly plump, and pretty young matron, who had produced an uncanny number of healthy offspring by an obviously paralyzed, although handsome, husband, and whose one thought was to get her children

away to be educated in some distant land. The behavior of this captivating great-grandmother of mine grievously shocked her respectable father, the famous Dr. Apostol Arsaki, of Greek birth but Roumanian repute. Fleeing in the early twenties of the last century, from the tyranny of Turkish-ruled Salonika toward more lenient skies, he had gone on foot, over mountain tracks, his two baby daughters—Olympia and Hélène—carried in twin baskets hung on either side of a docile mule. How he fed them during the trip my story does not tell.

These girls grew up to be beautiful and attractive. Their father, meanwhile, was making a great fortune and a brilliant political career as a Roumanian Liberal, while continuing his medical work; so his children had both married easily and well into Roumanian society, and smilingly lived up to their somewhat scandalous reputation. By the time my Granny, then Marie Manesco, had emerged at seventeen from her Paris school, her mother, conveniently widowed, had legitimately married Prince Cantacuzene, the wealthy titled man who was responsible for some of her brood, and decided to have none of her three elder daughters lingering around the house. Within three weeks of her return from Paris, Granny was engaged; another six and she was married—in June, 1862, to Lieutenant Theodore Vacaresco.

My father Rudolf [in Roumanian *Radu*] was the only surviving son of my grandparents, who had also begotten three sturdy girls. To this quite adequate family Granny had chosen to add yet another little girl, the pretty neglected daughter of a distant kinsman, a Greek immigrant come to seek fortune in Roumania at a time when my country's newly revealed wealth had created a rush almost comparable to the one attracting prospectors to California. The tale remains somewhat obscure to me, but the fact that Hélène Kasotti became the richest Roumanian heiress of her day and my father's bride makes me occasionally wonder whether Granny's motives were completely disinterested.

In this line therefore my pedigree is anything but outstanding: although Grandpa Spiridon Kasotti could boast of millions, few could tell who his father had been. He was a self-made man and his life might well compare with some fabulous American career. He arrived from Greece—young, penniless, “tall, dark, and handsome”—immediately married a wife with some means and started making money for himself. His abilities were unquestionable, but his temper short; so he promptly tired of his well-to-do consort, threw all her property in her face, and went his own way. An issue of bonds, the first ever made in Roumania, in payment of expropriated mortgaged estates was thrown onto the market by the Government of the then reigning Prince Cuza in 1864. Since no landowner could believe in the value of these bits of paper, they sold out in a breath; and Kazotti bought, for all he was worth, of these despised chits, selling even the minute house he had painfully acquired to buy more shares. Laughing at his stupidity, a friend offered board and breakfast, plus some menial work to this misguided fool. The bonds were still falling, and Grandpapa still trying to find another loan and go on buying more. Within three years, his initial investment was increased tenfold.

Falling in love with a married woman, who had already five children, he made her get a divorce, married her, and had the only child she ever bore him, my mother. Meanwhile, on a trip to Paris, he was caught in the 1870 siege and instead of fleeing remained to try his luck on the slumping Paris stock exchange, where the French *rentes* were falling to nothing. He managed to borrow a million francs from Rothschild's, bought state shares at twenty-five; and as everyone knows, by 1872 under the Thiers presidency, the government bonds were back at par. Grandpapa could now call three French millions his own—a lot of money in those days, particularly when it was added to all the real estate he had steadily acquired in Roumania.

But apart from his business, he knew no leisure, enjoyed no

spacious gardens, and of poorly paved narrow streets seething with picturesque life, gaiety, and gossip, over which innumerable small churches and chapels, with round belfries and squat domes, seemed to extend their blessings. The town of my birth was a green, religious, smiling one.

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broad shouldered, thin waisted, with narrow hips and well-shaped legs, and had the slenderest wrists and ankles a man could have without looking degenerate. His movements were elegant without affectation. Sparing in gestures, he only occasionally implemented his conversation with a motion of his long, narrow hands. His head was small with flat black hair worn with a middle part on a rather low brow. Large brown eyes, a regular aquiline nose, and a well-shaped full mouth in a pale oval face complete my picture.

Magnificent on horseback, my father could not only ride but train and drill a horse with experienced skill. Intelligent—if sometimes superficial—witty, successful, well-dressed, cultured, and well-read, Papa was, for all his qualities, somewhat of a rake. He had numerous and resounding love affairs, bred and kept beautiful horses, very quickly went through that portion of her vast fortune my mother had in her will bestowed upon him, and even fell rapidly into serious debt. In a word, he was a typical beau of Edwardian days.

Owing to this state of affairs, I was educated amidst great luxury alternating with incredible sordidness, according to the ups and downs of my father's adventures and fortunes. Such extraordinary and rapid variations, puzzling to a young mind, provided an adequate background for future experiences but left little room for illusions.

My grandmother adored me and brought me up with loving care, but she had a good deal to cope with, particularly as she went unaware of the diverse discoveries over which I would ponder for days. It is not healthy to notice, when still in the nursery, so many weird happenings which induce a certain amount of cynicism even in an immature mind. As an only child, I very early realized the advantage of my position in the family, and into the traditional framework of a quite conventional upbringing, I managed to insert a good deal of novelty and amusement. Aside from far too much thinking, I was a normal child.

In keeping with the custom habitual among Polish, Russian, Hungarian, or Roumanian aristocratic families, I had an English

Nanny, competing and struggling with a sturdy Roumanian wet nurse ignorant of hygiene, and an old German Fraulein, who had brought up my aunts and now acted as companion and household supervisor. Later a French governess came to start me on literature and history. At the age of seven I talked these four languages fluently, without having made an effort to learn them. Italian, which I acquired a few years later, is the only idiom which gave me some trouble because I consciously studied it, instead of just "knowing" it. This method was excellent for me as I had, and have, no gift for languages. I may speak five, yet I am no linguist: proof is that I have been unable, in my adult days to learn Russian or Spanish, both of which might have been useful.

My upbringing was a queer mixture of indulgence to my caprices combined with the strictest discipline. This worship of social convention reigning in my family was little meant to breed personality, and only my violent spirit of contradiction saved me from being shaped according to the common mold. As a child, in the country, the peasant servants, or my Saxon maid, used respectfully to kiss my hand in the morning but later in the day sternly to reprimand me if I upset a flower vase or created havoc in my well-ordered room. So I decided that it would be one or the other and firmly hid my hands behind my back when threatened with the hand-kissing ceremony. This gesture, of a five year old, created a storm in a teacup, but Papa thought I was right to discard outdated customs and no trouble ensued.

This happened at Maneshti, our country place, which was about fifty miles distant from Bucharest and almost at the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains. Here, during the mild autumn, the whole family regularly gathered around my grandparents for the two or three best shooting months of the year. I can still see myself, sitting at the far end of the long, narrow family table, in the children's department, watching my elders and listening to their quick argumentative conversation.

There was my father, single for many years, later with his tall slim, witty second wife, who made up by daring chic and elegance for her lack of beauty. Then came my three aunts with their two husbands. The eldest was the widow of Prince Michael Ghica and the mother of four daughters who were my usual playmates, in spite of some difference in our ages. Aunt Hélène Ghica was big, stout, intelligent, and something of an intriguer. Extremely proud of her girls' fine appearance, she resented her lack of means, and was apt to envy all and sundry.

Quite different was her sister, Marie Catargi, tall and well-proportioned, ugly, so shortsighted as to be almost blind, and as kind as kind could be. She simply worshiped her husband, who was the most delightful, cultured drunk I ever met.

The two other children in the family, daughters of the Léon Cantacuzene couple, my baby cousins and much younger than I, had also to appear at the family table though still with bibs and in high chairs.

In all twenty-two seated people, without counting rare occasional guests, but naturally including our respective governesses, dined together. In the dim candlelight of our table end, meals appeared to us children a gloomy ordeal, since we were compelled to keep quiet and were given a much plainer diet than that of the grownups. This we bitterly resented and deplored at length in the school-room.

With upright dignity, Granny presided over the whole table, her husband on her right, her son on her left. The others could well-nigh sit as they pleased, according to age or sympathies. The service, performed by an aged butler and two or three young footmen more or less well trained, ran smoothly under the vigilant supervision of old Lolo, once my aunts' Fraulein, now our housekeeper.

Such was the immemorial tradition of the family, rarely broken, at least in my early childhood, by the gay intrusion of visitors. Any arrival was an enormous treat to me, and I feel sure that some of my

partiality for social life and entertaining was due to a staunch spirit of rebellion against my early upbringing.

So exclusive was our country circle that even my father's best friend, Léon Ghyka of Dumbraveni, entered it only much later, when I was over ten years old. But when he did first appear, it was with a vengeance, and never again could he be tabooed from our midst. We all simply adored him.

Granny disapproved of him in principle because of the bad reputation he enjoyed. Was he not supposed to lead a loose life, pester innocent young ladies, keep women of ill fame, give bawdy parties, and spend money like water? A very bad companion for her darling Radu—as if Papa needed anybody to teach him misbehavior! In any case, there was madness in his family, and one never knew what fit might overcome him in our house.

But one gay day Léon decided to “gate-crash” Maneshti by pretending he had lost his way in the night and arriving late and unheralded, begging for hospitality, which naturally had to be granted. This sounded slightly phoney to our childish astuteness, so the Ghica girls and I decided to investigate. We soon found out how well planned Léon's intrusion had been. Not only had he specially hired a cab driver who knew the intricate road from Ploeshti's railway station to our house, but he was carrying with him the yards of dark cloth required to black out his room thoroughly, protecting the long morning rest his sleepless nights and overstrained nerves sorely needed. Furthermore, he was burdened with large boxes of chocolates and a coveted book for me. We did not reveal all these coincidences to Granny, but undoubtedly she drew her own conclusions.

Such was the first appearance in our lives of our short, somewhat stout, slightly bald, bright-eyed, emphatically well-spoken, well-read, and altogether delightful new friend. Never until his death, did I lose touch with Léon Ghyka, who turned out to be my husband's

kinsman and close companion, although almost old enough to be his father.

Maneshti was then to me a much steadier background than my country itself. Only as I slowly grew did my love for my native land grow too, so that I now realize how deeply my roots were planted in Roumanian soil. Listening to its legends, fairy tales, or history made me gradually aware of the links tying me to its past. Here, as in almost everything else, I owe the best of myself to my grandmother's invaluable care and affection.

Granny Remembers

MADAM, there is again something wrong with the child." Dimmed by pain and distance, I could hear Nanny's harsh voice speaking at Granny's doorway. Nanny highly disapproved of this system of waking my grandmother for each of my recurrent earaches or tummy aches. Wasn't she well enough trained and experienced to cope with such minor ailments? But orders were orders, and Nanny knew that if she disregarded them, Granny would have gone sleepless out of sheer anxiety, instead of being disturbed only on good grounds.

My grandmother's affection for me was so deep and strong that I can only explain it as a sort of substitute for the disillusionments that the rest of her family, above all her husband and son, had inflicted upon her. My father had shattered many of her dearest hopes, and she surely bore him in mind when she repeatedly quoted to me La Rochefoucauld's maxim: *Les grands noms abaissent, au lieu de les élever, ceux qui ne les savent point soutenir*. My mother's premature death had frustrated the family hope of further male descendants, and Granny had transferred all her love and ambitions to me, a mere baby, as yet too young to fulfill any of her ambitions. Therefore when I showed the slightest sign of illness, Nanny had to call her at any time of night.

Why do all children's illnesses seem to start in the middle of the

night? Mine did, and numerous they were—of the usual benign types, like measles, chicken pox, whooping cough, mumps, plus a few more drastic kinds. I was a bad case of scarlet fever, and when I developed typhoid at the age of about three—before the discovery of inoculations and vaccinations—my life was seriously endangered. So whether at Bucharest or Maneshti, no matter what my illness, I would be moved to the large, comfortable couch in Granny's boudoir, and there I would lie, with Granny at my side telling me of the folklore and history of our country or of her own life and travels. Granny's narratives were always vivid and evocative, her impressions remained so fresh, colorful, and accurate that I sometimes imagine they are my own and that I am not just conveying another's memories.

There she was, a ten-year-old with pigtails, dressed in a child's dainty crinoline with lace-trimmed underpants showing, ready to ascend the old-fashioned Danube steamer that would carry her off to distant Paris. It was on a hot summer day in 1855 that her mother, Hélène Manesco, whose adventures I have already mentioned, was taking Granny by slow waterways and coaches across the whole continent of Europe to the fashionable boarding school which was to be her home for the next seven years. This proved to be a spacious Paris *hôtel* on the left bank of the Seine, previously the property of some aristocratic French family ruined by the 1789 Revolution and now turned into a private school. This handsome building, with large halls and rooms, slanting slate roofs *à la Mansard*, and white stone decorations on red brick background seemed very much in the style of Madame de Sévigné's Hôtel Carnavalet, now the charming Museum of the City of Paris.

From the first moment the atmosphere was one of austerity tempered by kindness, and my grandmother adored her school years. The new pupils were received in a large, book-lined study by the imposing, portly figure of Madame Hachet de Macy, descendant of an old, now impoverished, family who, efficiently helped by a

spinster daughter, ran the establishment in traditional French way like the original Institution of Saint-Cyr, or in the manner of Madame Campan. The latter had been Marie Antoinette's former *lectrice*, who opened a school in which she was lucky enough to educate young Hortense de Beauharnais, thus attracting the attention of the girl's stepfather, General Bonaparte. As Emperor Napoleon I, he entrusted Madame Campan with the creation of the Girls' College of Écouen to teach the sisters and daughters of his *parvenu* marshals and fellow officers the manners and refined behavior of the *ancien régime*.

Madame de Macy belonged to another period, more sedate than the garish Empire fashions of Napoleon III. She had, indeed, belonged in some capacity to the household of Marie Amélie, the bourgeois King Louis Philippe's unobtrusive wife; and this created enough of a link with past royalty to have all the young girls of the new regime sent to her school where they were bound to associate with the daughters of the legitimate aristocracy and to acquire the best traditional manners.

Murat, Wagram, Clary, De Lesseps, were the names of Granny's schoolmates and the explanation of her premature entry into the circles and gaiety of Imperial society; for she usually spent her vacations with one of her young French friends, her own mother having no desire to see her back home. Outside the boundaries of the school's walled garden reigned the unleashed fantasy of the *vie parisienne* immortalized by Offenbach and by the many books and memoirs that I later greedily devoured.

But inside the school was to be found the serious counterpart of the picture, a sobering influence for the offsprings of the Empire belles. The pupils' uniforms made no allowance for the day's extravagant fashions. Long black wool dresses, whose wide skirts were the only concession to the reigning crinoline, but no hoops. Hoops had been launched by Empress Eugénie, a few years back, to conceal her pregnancy, and the mere mention of such contrap-

tions was shocking. Tight-fitting bodices covered undeveloped breasts, high collars were without ruffles or frills, hair was drawn flatly back and enclosed in thick, black velvet mesh nets, aimed at nullifying the most radiant beauty. Discipline was strict, almost spartan. No fires in the dormitories, where at times the water froze in the small water jugs provided for short morning toilets. First Low Mass was attended every day at seven-thirty before breakfast. Bedtime was at ten o'clock, and all lights were out half an hour later. The program of studies was very full, with short recreations, and practically no time devoted to any sport or exercise, except for a little old-fashioned gymnastics. There was plenty of music, drawing, and dancing, all the accomplishments of the perfect lady. German and English were compulsory, taught by a resident teacher, naturally a native of these countries; but, judging from Granny's linguistic deficiency, these items could not have been given very special attention. A few celebrated lecturers came from outside to give special courses in literature and history, music and the ballet.

It was through these last two subjects, which Granny never acquired to any degree because she was nearly tone-deaf, that these strictly educated girls caught glimpses of the brilliant, frivolous Paris of the Second Empire. Twice a week, in batches of six or eight, they were sent to hear Patti, Alboni, or Grisi sing at the world-renowned Théâtre des Italiens. On these evenings of adventure Granny acquired an amazing amount of information and gossip about personalities of the day from her more worldly school-mates.

Her two favorite companions were Marie Clary and the more conspicuous Princess Anna Murat. Granny yearly spent her holidays with the motherless Marie, daughter of the well-known shot and courtier, Baron Joseph Clary, and through her met the many sons of the famous De Lesseps. To Granny's lasting sorrow, Marie died shortly after her marriage.

Very different was her other friend, Princess Anna Murat. She

was all glamour and success, the very impersonation of a brilliant, if shallow, period. Five years older than Granny, to whom she was very kind, her successes at Court were outstanding and sufficiently spectacular to arouse the vigilant jealousy of the Empress. It was whispered that Anna's cousin, Napoleon III, had been oversensitive to her radiant, slightly plump beauty, her elegant demeanor, bright auburn hair, and lovely soft blue eyes, and that the delightful Anna often succeeded in bringing a smile to the tired lips of the eternally bored, melancholy Emperor. The flirtation took quite alarming proportions and culminated in a rapid scene and an exchange of sharp words between Eugénie and Anna during an intimate boating party on the lake at Grosbois, the magnificent countryseat of the Prince of Wagram, Anna's maternal uncle.

A short *passade* with some renowned hetaera, Marguerite Bellangé or even that fascinating beauty, Countess de Castiglione, Cavour's friend and spy, the Empress could overlook; but here lay danger—birth, kinship, ambition—there was too much to fear for one who had experienced and made the best of Napoleon's weakness toward women. Eugénie was visibly upset and promptly worked out a plan to marry off the half-reluctant Anna to one of the most stylish men of this elegant period, bearing a name justly illustrious in the French *nobiliaire*: Antoine de Noailles, Duke de Mouchy, Prince de Poix.

"And the Empress, Granny, the Empress, did you know her?" I would keep repeating.

"Not really, darling. I once curtsied to her on the beach at Trouville when she greeted Marie Clary with whom I was, but I didn't really know her. I saw her quite often driving in the Bois de Boulogne in her carriage *à la daumont*, dressed in green velvet trimmed with sables, a tiny muff hanging from her neck by a long jeweled chain, or in summer with enormous picture hats covered in poppies or cornflowers, wearing filmy, embroidered muslin dresses. She also often walked with the Prince Imperial on the Tuileries Terrace

near the Seine Embankment. Large crowds would gather to cheer the little boy who was much more popular than his parents.

"He often wore a kilt in token of the Empress's Scottish descent, as on the day I saw him sitting between the Imperial pair when Paris celebrated Napoleon's return from his victorious Italian campaign. The Emperor looked worn and tired, while Eugénie acknowledged the Parisians' mad cheers, bowing and waving, meantime wiping tears from her cheeks with a lovely lace handkerchief—that was all I knew of the Empress."

Many years later I too had the opportunity of meeting for a fleeting moment the woman whose beauty had perhaps changed the course of history. It was in 1920, and Empress Eugénie was then a shrunken little old lady, peacefully sunning herself on a Riviera terrace overlooking the Mediterranean.

My husband and I had been asked to lunch by a charming hostess, who was partial to royalty, Madame Ernesta Stern, owner of a superb villa on Cap Ferrat. The timing of our ten-mile drive had obviously been wrong, for we arrived slightly before schedule and decided to take a short stroll in the luxurious and rather overcrowded gardens. We had hardly taken a few steps when we caught sight of our majestic white-haired friend, sitting on a pink granite bench with beside her a small withered figure all in black, whose face I could not distinguish.

"The Empress Eugénie," whispered my husband; and true enough there she was in the flesh, paying a neighborly call (her Villa Cynros was next door) and rapidly jabbering in Spanish with our hostess. Very impressed, I sank into a deep curtsy, my husband respectfully bowed, we were introduced; and after exchanging a few impersonal sentences, the Empress departed, not however without making a short bitter comment on the recent election of Paul Deschanel as President of the Republic in preference to the great figure of the recent war, Georges Clemenceau.

"It's a pity the French always seem frightened by glory; they feel safer with mediocrity." On these words Eugénie caught hold of the arm of her devoted chamberlain, secretary, and friend, Bacciocchi, and vanished from our sight.

Alas! Little remained of the graces Winterhalter had so well portrayed, or the radiant beauty which had been this woman's, who, now aged ninety-five, had survived the glamour of her reign, the tragic death of her son, and almost her own legend. All women, I concluded, ought to die young, especially the beautiful ones. . . . Shortly after that she, who had been the irresistible Countess of Teba, was to go back and die in the Palacio Liria in Madrid, the magnificent ancestral home of her nephew, the present Duke of Alba.

In Empire days, ladies of repute seem to have been extraordinarily long lived, judging by the comparatively large number of them I myself happened to meet, thus strengthening my links with Granny's memories.

Granny kept up with many of her old-time friends, and I therefore met still other protagonists of the Imperial glories and tragedies. One was Emile Ollivier, the last of Napoleon III's prime ministers, who lightheartedly declared war on Germany and spent the rest of his life apologizing. Others were the famous Countess Mélanie de Pourtales, who had warned the Emperor of Bismarck's ambitions and who even at an advanced age retained a vitality that exhausted her most energetic hosts; and Princess Mathilde Bonaparte-Demidoff, who refused to marry her cousin when the Imperial throne was not in sight—but later tried to recapture him when he had won the crown.

Yet the really unparalleled figure at the Court of the Tuileries was a foreigner, more typical of that reign than any other personality of her day. Princess Pauline Metternich had become a legend even in her lifetime. She was unique, and perhaps the only woman of the period to achieve fame without beauty. But her wit and

intelligence were unequaled, and public opinion credited her with every possible success, from the launching of the unknown English dressmaker Worth as a world-renowned couturier, to the drafting of faultless diplomatic reports signed by her husband, the Austrian Ambassador in Paris, to be sent back to the Emperor Franz Josef in Vienna. The irresistible Ambassadors, besides capturing Empress Eugénie's friendship and affection, was supposed to have free access to the Emperor's benevolent ear, and her advice was highly valued. It is, therefore, amazing that so shrewd a diplomatist should not have foreseen the Prussian attack on Austria in 1866, or obtained Napoleon's armed intervention before the disaster of Sadowa. This aid might, if victorious, have avoided or discouraged the Prussian ambitions and German Imperialism, which was to be born from the French defeat.

But these were perhaps too serious speculations for Pauline Metternich, young, gay, and content to be the idol of all the capitals in which she lived. Her native Budapest was proud of her; she was adored in Paris; and her home town, Vienna, celebrated her in a verse, bearing witness to her popularity:

*'S gibt nur a Kaiserstadt, 's gibt nur a Wien,
'S gibt nur eine Fürstin, die Metternich Paulin'.*

There's only one Emperor's town, there's only one Vienna,
There's only one Princess, the Metternich Paulina.

Unique, I repeat, she appeared to her compatriots and also to me when I saw her driving in her canary-yellow coach with powdered lackeys, under the green vault of the Prater alleys on a mild spring day. She was very old when I was taken to meet her, but still true to the rude description given in her heyday by some outspoken Frenchman, *Un charmant ouistiti* [A charming little ape].

Quick in her movements and repartee, daring and unexpected in most of her utterances, she was the only daughter of a crack Hungarian horseman, Count Maurice Sándor, who for the sake

of a bet once jumped his best hunter into the Danube from the heights of the Buda bridge. He got away with it, landed his horse safely in midstream and returned triumphant and drenched. He eventually ended in a lunatic asylum, and even this mishap his daughter used for her private aims.

One year in the sixties, the Empress Eugénie was as usual planning some amateur theatricals to take place during a shooting-season house party at the Château de Compiègne. I cannot remember the title of the play in which the Empress, as customary, took the leading part. Another minor role Princess Metternich specially fancied, and she asked the Empress for it.

"I am sorry," came the reply, "but I have already promised that to one of my ladies, the Countess de la Poeze. She's very eager for the part and I dare not upset her. You know, poor girl, her mother is insane, and I am always frightened for her own mind. You must understand, my dear."

"Is that all, Ma'am?" Pauline Metternich gasped. "Then I insist on the part. Doesn't everyone know my father has long been certified and I may be in danger too?"

I never found evidence of this particular tale but Granny vouched for its authenticity, and the Ambassadors's quick temper was no secret.

The story of the introduction of the lasting French habit of eating ice cream with a fork is not so well known. Like her father, Pauline Metternich-Sandor did not disdain a bet, above all with so fashionable a rival as the young and attractive Prince of Wales (Edward VII) then on a visit to Paris. The object of the contest was to determine which of these two recognized leaders of fashion would be able to launch the most absurd new "mode."

What the Prince's attempt was my story omits. Tradition, however, has it that, when at an Imperial banquet ices were served with the classical little shovel-shaped spoons, Princess Metternich, with a look of anguish on her face, suddenly exclaimed in a loud

voice, "A fork. Please give me a fork! Who can eat ice cream with a spoon? It can't be done. I must have a fork."

A bewildered footman handed her the required implement. The whole table gazed awe-stricken, hesitated. Then asked for forks. And the most absurd of fashions was launched. *Se non e vero. . .* I find it too good not to be true.

These were the frivolous sidelights to my Granny's serious education, by now drawing to its end; for she was over sixteen, and judged old enough to be brought home and promptly married to the eligible young man already earmarked for her by the far-planning parents of both parties. In fact, Granny was given no breather, no time to regret her Paris friends and surroundings, or to get acclimatized to the very provincial little capital Bucharest must then have been.

Without any consultation of her feelings and tastes, my Granny was married to a dashing little Roumanian lieutenant, fresh from his military training in the Prussian Cadets' School at Potsdam. He must have been as stiff as his masters, and surely already had his screwed-in monocle and that beard I so disliked. Her marriage practically coincided with her seventeenth birthday, and for fifty years of conjugal life, Granny was loyal and seemed to worship her unfaithful husband, who brought her position and troubles, all sorts of thrills, but never the peace and quiet for which she had yearned.

Grandpapa, for all his lack of looks, could make himself most agreeable, was very intelligent and cultured, an excellent conversationalist. He was reputed a good officer, although a few years after his marriage he had entered into a conspiracy to overthrow the then reigning Prince, Alexander Jon Cuza, whose aide-de-camp he was, and to replace him on the throne by a ruler drawn from a foreign dynasty, in order to avoid the terrible feuds invariably occurring among qualified aristocratic families each time a princely election was at hand. Those Roumanian princes were, but for their

title, mere temporary rulers elected for seven years, hardly longer than a president of the United States.

Prince Cuza was certainly a dissolute man whose private life was most objectionable. Yet Roumanians are not as a rule oversensitive about morals, and surely my grandfather's behavior did not qualify him for puritanism. Neither did I think it was an aide-de-camp's business to betray his direct military chief, but Granny would have none of my criticisms. She had been thrilled at being admitted to the secrets of the conspiracy, and firmly believed Prince Cuza was evil and had to be removed. Besides, did not heaven bless her husband's attitude and bring a most devoted friend into her life, the future sovereign of Roumania, Prince Charles of Hohenzollern Sigmaringen?

True enough the plot succeeded, mainly because the conspirators on entering his bedroom found Prince Cuza in such company that he could neither give the alert, nor call for his devoted guard, so intent was he on shielding the reputation of his mistress, a well-known Roumanian lady. Grandfather had been appointed to escort the former ruler over the border, and was then sent to the Danubian port of Turnu-Severin. Here the newly chosen Prussian Prince was to alight from the steamer on which he had traveled incognito because his candidature to the Roumanian throne was, in principle, opposed by Russia, Turkey, and Austria, the three protecting powers of minute Roumania.

Meanwhile, Grandpapa had been named Prefect of the province of Prahova, whose capital, Ploeshti, was on the route the Prince was following to reach his new capital, Bucharest. As the Prefect's wife, it was Granny's lot to receive on the threshold of her small Ploeshti house the new Prince and his followers and to offer them a meal because she could not extend more lavish hospitality.

Rumor had it that Prince Charles, soon to be King Carol I, fell for Granny the very first moment he met her. She was then just

under twenty and must have been very attractive, in her simple dress of white muslin with tiny ruffles edged in blue, adorning the open bodice and short sleeves. Her jewels were red coral beads round the neck, waist, and wrists. Her earrings and carved pink coral brooch, gold mounted, were of eighteenth-century Turkish workmanship—and are among the few family heirlooms still left in my possession.

That the King was captivated I heard from his own mouth the day I was officially, if privately, presented to him and Queen Carmen Sylva, albeit I had known them since childhood. Afterward I had the privilege of being seated beside him at lunch in Castle Pelesh at Sinaia, the Court's summer residence. Suddenly the King turned to me and said with a glance at Granny, on his other side, "You cannot imagine how pretty and fresh your grandmother was when I first knew her. Such simplicity in her dress! Such order in her house!"

He then immediately reverted, as if shy, to pictures and travel, with politics his main topic of conversation. He was a stern, rigid old gentleman, slightly awe-inspiring and terribly Teutonic, but of high morals and remarkable intellect.

In spite of innumerable and indiscreet questions I could never get precise information out of Granny as to their relationship which, I knew from hearsay, had remained pure. Granny talked rarely, reluctantly, about that period of her life, whether from timidity or regret I never knew. She was a saint in her way and surely remained true to her duty, but accepted for her husband all the advantages King Carol's devotion for her entailed, such as his first post of aide-de-camp to the King and many others that followed.

In 1876 my grandfather was sent to Russia, or rather the Crimea, as second to Jon Bratiano, the then Prime Minister, on his visit to Czar Alexander II for negotiations previous to the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. During this campaign Grandpapa again accompa-

nied Prince Carol as aide-de-camp. After this war of liberation and the signing of the Treaty of Berlin, Roumania was created a kingdom.

The new King immediately appointed Colonel Vacaresco, as he had become, Marshal of the Court, and in this position he remained for the next twelve years. Granny was seeing still much of the King, but more even of his Queen, born Princess Elisabeth of Wied but better known, and remembered, by her pen name of Carmen Sylva.

As Marshal of the Court, Grandpapa used to accompany King Carol I regularly on his annual summer visits to various small German courts. Why Granny always went too, even before the King's marriage, I cannot quite fathom, but she did. Subservient punctilio and correct rigidity were expected from court officials, and on the whole the King of Roumania's staff had been chosen true to type. The exception was Granny, with her natural high spirits and Parisian training, her easy laughter and bubbling sense of fun. Grandpapa was rather scared for his job, but she knew better. She actually knew that her gay shortcomings, not his correct qualities, kept him in his post.

After the royal wedding Granny was no more the only woman in the royal staff. The new Queen's lady in waiting joined the party, and was teamed with Granny, who liked her well. Yet never have I seen such contrast as between those two. Aunt Olga Mavrojeni was as stiff and cold as Granny was kind and smiling. Tall, thin, dry, swathed in severe black satin and veils, extremely distinguished, she always struck me as the perfect type of the *camarera mayor*, in the grand, most rigid Spanish tradition.

By this time Granny had a very nice house in Bucharest, regularly attended court functions, entertained all visiting royalty, diplomats, and Roumanian political circles, in addition to supervising her daughters' education.

My father had been sent to Germany for his studies, but hated it so much he had finally to be brought home and afterward sent

to Paris. Granny was quite happy, but all this was too good to last, and my grandfather was growing much too careless in his extra-conjugal behavior. Finally he became involved in an unsavory affair with an actress—the details of which I never discovered—and was compelled to resign his court office.

Even after this painful occurrence King Carol did not completely drop this favorite couple, and my grandfather was subsequently appointed Minister to Brussels, to Rome, and at last to Vienna, where my papa, by now graduated from the Paris Faculté de Droit and having passed his diplomatic examinations, was named secretary to his father.

Vienna is one of my favorite cities. Should I follow my own instincts, I would go far beyond Granny's memories into the whole political, social, and artistic history of that town and the surrounding Austro-Hungarian Empire from the time Franz Josef ascended the Imperial throne (1848) until this most artificial state crumbled under the impact of World War I. That is because of all the dying aristocracies the old continent can boast the Austrian one has, with the exception of the Mayerling drama, inspired less literature and produced fewer memoirs than any I know.

When Granny settled in her Vienna Embassy the happy days of the once strikingly handsome, Austrian Imperial couple were long past. The period of Empress Elisabeth's political activity and influence had equally come to an end. Still extremely beautiful, yet a disillusioned, crowned vagabond, she rarely appeared in Vienna and almost never attended Court functions. The little interest she occasionally showed in the realm's internal affairs was limited to siding with her son, whose ideals she shared, in his recurrent conflicts with his father, Franz Josef. Both her daughters were married and death had rid her of that imperious rival, her hated mother-in-law Archduchess Sofia, who had encouraged the Emperor's infidelities, attempted to rob her of her children's affection, and actually deprived her of any interference in their education. The pretext to such cruelty

had been Elisabeth's alleged pro-Magyar and non-Austrian feelings under the influence of her able, brilliant Hungarian lover, Prime Minister Count Gyula Andr  ssy, whose sane policies were designed to ease the permanent tension between Budapest and Vienna. The old woman was dead, but the harm was done: the Hapsburg's family life remained disrupted by strife and dissention.

Emperor Franz Josef had retired into an existence of almost complete seclusion and hard work. Awake at six o'clock every morning, granting audiences at eight to bewildered diplomats or his own crown ministers, he never sat down while reading reports or documents, barely took the time to eat at eleven, an unvarying tray lunch—traditional Viennese beef stew accompanied by horse-radish sauce, sausage, potatoes, and the classical sauerkraut, or pickled cabbage. A short, early dinner and to bed at nine. Such was the Emperor's busy day, during which he did much and achieved little; for the real powers of government lay well out of his hands in those of his ministers. The Government itself appeared weak and wavering, very much at the orders of Berlin, particularly so where foreign politics were concerned. This state of affairs infuriated his gifted son, Archduke Rudolf, who was brilliant, bored, and unhappily married, and led him, through lack of interesting occupation or dismay, to a life of drinking in low Vienna "locals" and numerous sordid affairs.

Vienna's social life, for centuries gravitating around its Court, was oddly affected by the continuous absence of the Empress and curtailment of entertaining at the Hofburg. Elisabeth no longer attended the three formal annual Court balls. The Heir Presumptive's wife, cold, correct, Archduchess St  phanie, played absolutely no part in public functions. All this created a dislocation of social life, which seemed reduced to family parties and made the diplomats' position extremely awkward, because officials rarely associated on equal footing with the very exclusive and birth-conscious Austrian aristocracy. Even Court invitations were differently labeled according

to whether the recipients had their "quarterings" (better said: were of pure descent in rank and title) or were simple commoners asked only by reason of their temporary position or personal achievements. Clubs were still more exclusive, although no special provisions were drafted in their statutes. Thus, until 1914, only two Jews were admitted to the Jockey Club: the head of the Rothschild family and the genial Baron Springer, the universally appreciated racehorse owner, whose colors were as well established in Vienna as in Budapest.

Granny was terrified at committing some mistake and felt lost in the intricacies of rules and traditions dating from the reign of Charles V, but she was soon to be saved by her Paris acquaintance with Princess Metternich. A polite call, an immediate answer, and in the joy of reminiscing over a distant past, Pauline Metternich, who was all-powerful in Vienna, immediately solved Granny's thorny problems.

By modern standards Princess Metternich was anything but old, and her deportment and behavior were as lively and brilliant as ever. Her rank, wealth, and position allowed her to treat lightly the conventions of a society which bored her and whose prejudices she smilingly dismissed. To speak French and to talk of her Parisian glories delighted her, and she therefore insisted on herself introducing Granny to the snobbish Austrian aristocracy: "Meet the new Roumanian Ministress, Madame Vacaresco, a friend of my Paris days." (Omitting the detail that Granny was then a schoolgirl and she already the almighty Austrian Ambassadress.) Now Granny was launched on the grandest scale, and people even seemed to excuse her ignorance of the German language which hitherto she had found a great handicap.

Through Pauline Metternich, my grandparents became well acquainted with two most important personalities in Vienna's social and political life: the German Ambassador, Prince Henry VII of Reuss, and his haughty wife, who was related to the whole of Europe's royalty. At first on cordial terms with the Vacaresco family,

Princess Reuss was later instrumental in the scandal which cost my grandfather his post and Papa his diplomatic career, but from the strictly correct point of view, she was evidently right.

Direct queries and devious investigations only revealed that my grandfather had committed some unpardonable indiscretion, using the Reuss's name in a report which had been intercepted by the Imperial police. All envoys do such things, but must carefully avoid being caught!

Submissively, the Ballhausplatz informed the German Embassy, and the next time my father, unaware, attended one of Princess Reuss's weekly at-homes, she practically threw him out of her house, accusing the whole Roumanian Legation of breach of confidence and moral cheating. Drama ensued; a duel was almost fought but somehow miscarried; my father was disqualified; and the mass resignation of Minister and staff was requested by the Austrian Foreign Office.

This ludicrous incident ended my family's official career, but Bucharest was lenient, since the revelations were not to Roumanian disadvantage, and my grandfather soon entered politics as a senator for that same district of Prahova, where he had started his administrative career and in which the family estate, Maneshti, was located. When his party (Conservative) was in power he was regularly elected Vice-President of the Senate, and the King, on the twenty-fifth anniversary of his reign, granted the rank of General to Grandpapa, who for years had been out of the army but remained terribly "Blimp-minded," if I may use so recently coined an expression. So, finally, my grandparents had done well out of the royal couple.

As a mere baby, I remember attending Queen Carmen Sylva's musical séances, where, dressed in long flowing robes, her white hair bearing a sort of halo covered with long lace draperies hanging down her back and shoulders, she listened for hours to the best Roumanian and foreign visiting artists play the piano, violin, or

violoncello. The Queen always went into raptures, reverting to her native German when touched emotionally. Granny, polite and bored, kept very quiet, but it was more difficult to obtain similar silence from me or Prince Carol, the future King Carol II who also attended, often with some of his playmates.

Carmen Sylva, intent on giving us our first musical training while keeping us under good control, used to make us crouch at the foot of the sofa on which she reclined. The desired result was obtained: we were scared beyond daring to move, let alone to utter a sound. Only once did I publicly disgrace myself at the Palace, on a memorable occasion when nature suddenly spoke louder than my fears. What I squeaked into Mama Regina's ear about the urgency of my plight I cannot quite remember. All I know is that she immediately released me and told Granny, rushing forward to collect me, to go into an adjoining cabinet and bid Prince Carol's chamber pot to be brought for my use—this was done. But this unfamiliar utensil differed from the one I was accustomed to. An unexpected sight set me yelling, "I want my own pot, not a smudged one. I want my nice clean one."

A crown was painted on the bottom of Prince Carol's pot!

My screams were such I had to be shamefully removed and taken home still in tears. But royal patience was not discouraged, and a week later I had resumed my crouching position by Carmen Sylva's side and had been advised to listen with doubled attention to the concert. I can not tell the outcome of this training on Prince Carol's tastes, but I feel sure my love of music unconsciously goes back to those hours at the Royal Palace in Bucharest.

Carol I, like my Granny, was allergic to harmony and never appeared at his wife's musicales, but my grandfather often went to see him in private audiences which seemed to last for hours. They probably compared notes on the European situation, for I remember Grandpapa carrying a fat portfolio when he adjourned to one of

those sittings. He had long enough served the King to know his line of thought, so presumably they mourned in unison the days when thrones were powerful, and empires still revered.

Their similar Prussian education created a strong link: Germany's might and power were never doubted; Russia was cordially disliked; France was considered decayed; England mistrusted and dreaded. America was then still so far distant and isolationist that I do not imagine she much entered their talks; but Austria, I know, was a very sore spot, and the growing senility of Emperor Franz Josef a subject of concern to both these aging gentlemen.

Perhaps they commented on what might have happened had the brilliant Archduke Rudolf survived his father, instead of disappearing in the mysterious tragedy of Mayerling. My grandfather was still Minister in Vienna at that time (1889), and I even surmise that the report which caused his dismissal had some connection with the drama. It was at one of Princess Reuss's balls that the Archduke made his last public appearance, a day or two before his death; and Marie Vetsera was also there, glowing with happiness and youth, watched by all, for this was the first time she had attended a diplomatic party.

The little shooting box at Mayerling, so commonplace and drab to the inquisitive visitor, has well guarded the secret of that tragic January vigil. What the silent walls of the indifferent bedroom witnessed was never accurately revealed. Murder was the suspicion: suicide the current verdict. Even since the fall of Austria, the Vienna archives do not seem to have yielded any data enabling the truth to be established. Or has all proof been irremediably destroyed, as my grandmother firmly believed? She was not better informed than others, but being *en poste* in Vienna, her current knowledge, albeit scanty, was as good as any.

Was Marie Vetsera the scheming child some have described, an instrument at the hands of her astute Greek mother, whose dark looks she inherited, or simply a violently emotional girl at the peak

of her loveliness, dazzled by her marvelous conquest and the power she had begun to wield? None seemed to know, but there is a wild, determined expression in her large eyes in all her pictures hanging on Granny's photograph screen. She had met the Archduke casually at a shooting party, probably with her uncle Baltazzi, the evil spirit of the story, and Rudolf had been immediately enchanted with her youthful beauty and strange charm. His marriage to Princess Stéphanie of Belgium was not happy, chiefly through his own fault, although his numerous affairs had never been lasting. His wife was plain, respectable, and dull, strongly disapproving of his associations with cab drivers and tramps, and was, besides, incapable of following his idealistic, almost revolutionary political views. Marie instantly seemed to understand all his whims, share his tastes and theories.

Small wonder the Prince's attraction to Marie Vetsera rapidly took a serious turn, becoming an obsession at first visible only to his intimate circle but soon to the country at large. By instinct or skill, she played her cards well, giving little, promising much, keeping their meetings secret under the screening supervision of Joseph Baltazzi, until then only the Archduke's companion on low expeditions. On these he was driven by "*fiacker* Bratfisch," who actually took the couple to Mayerling on their last tragic trip. It was he, one dark night, who had brought the young girl to a secret entrance of the Hofburg, where Prince Philip of Coburg, Rudolf's brother-in-law, had taken her to her lover's private apartments. Only after the tale had spread did a few ambitious hostesses ask Marie Vetsera to their houses, hoping to secure the Archduke's attendance. The drama, therefore, came to most, even officials and the family, as a rude awakening. What had suddenly determined the tragic climax? A clash between father and son? Threats of divorce? The announcement by Marie of her pregnancy? All theories seemed valid, but none were ever confirmed.

The first tidings that came to the legations and embassies was a laconic summons to all heads of missions to the Ballhausplatz

the following morning at ten o'clock. A previous private message informed my grandfather, without his giving it much credence, of the double death or murder of Rudolf and his mistress.

At the Ministry, Premier Kálmoky in person confirmed to the still startled envoys the death of the Crown Prince, but gave no further explanation. The rest was guesswork and surmise. Official lips remained sealed.

The funeral ceremony was delayed; it was whispered the Pope refused to grant Christian burial to a suicide, even though an Emperor's son. The Empress, on the verge of collapse, in deep despair, seemed obsessed with the idea of doom attached to her ill-fated Wittelsbach blood. Stunned, but amazingly calm, Franz Josef was said to have personally interviewed the three nearest witnesses of the drama: Coburg, Count Hoyos, and Rudolf's valet, then committed them to eternal silence. Bratfisch, the cab driver, too had seen his Emperor, been sworn to discretion, and handsomely pensioned. Finally orders had been given for the destruction of all papers and testimonies bearing proof of the true facts.

Granny's information may have been faulty, but her complete sincerity and the lack of any published documents have since made me doubt any detailed or romantic account of events so carefully concealed by the few acquainted with the actual truth.

With the Crown Prince's death Court life at the Hofburg practically died out; a veil of gloom extended over the country as a whole and the thread of Granny's Vienna memories breaks off a mere space of months separating the Mayerling drama from her return to Bucharest where, after my father's marriage in May, 1890, she resumed a normal private existence of which I became aware six or seven years later.

The Backdrop

GRANNY used to say, "Anne-Marie, you sometimes frighten me; you are a battlefield between the contradictory instincts of your ancestors. All their past seems to fight incessantly in your nature. I often wonder what sort of a woman you will grow up to be. A lighthearted spendthrift, always on the move like the Vacarescos; or businesslike, sedate, a little grabbing, like your grandpapa Kazotti? Will you have a clear-cut Greek outlook on life, or a brilliant superficial Roumanian one? And where does that queer Slav streak in you come from—that mania for always analyzing and discussing your feelings? I call it, '*Couper les cheveux en quatre*,' and then you start cutting them in eight! You appear to have some common sense and are not stupid, but then those modern fancies of yours of freedom and independence will take you nowhere. I am rather sorry for the poor man who will marry you. You may give him an amusing time, but I'm afraid you'll never make him a safe, good quiet wife. And your children, if you ever have any! . . . You're positively puzzling with all that struggle that goes on in you. You ought to try and choose a straight line."

So spoke my Granny in her preaching moods. How right she was as to my inner struggles, in her prevision too, and probably in her ultimate conclusion. But why choose a straight narrow line? I have remained a battlefield and enjoyed it.

I may perhaps not be able to boast of the poise and balance that the more even background of Western civilization offers its children, since I belong to a climate and tradition full of extremes, contradictions, and struggles. I therefore might at this point recount some facts about the country I was born to, which like myself, was and remains a battlefield not only in its violent political strifes and turmoils but also, in a more real sense, the ground on which for innumerable centuries battles were fought by many different invaders and peoples.

Geographically, Roumania lies between the forty-third and forty-ninth degrees of latitude and the twenty-ninth and thirtieth degrees of longitude east. But historically, it lies at a particularly awkward angle, adjoining on the one side the last outposts of Western Europe, by which I mean Austria, Hungary, and the former Roman Germanic Empire, on the other bordering upon the semi-Asiatic plains of southern Russia, making the country a crossroads between two completely different civilizations and cultures. Near at hand, for several hundreds of years, stretched lands under the Moslem influence of the Turks, direct heirs to the equally Oriental, Byzantine Roman Empire. Labels and creeds may have changed, but the common denominators and antagonisms have always remained very similar.

The first historical conquest of these distant lands dates back to A.D. 101 when Trajan and his Roman Legions defeated the Dacian inhabitants. This difficult and resounding campaign was commemorated in a triumphal column, erected in Rome at the center of Trajan's Forum, that shows in its bas-reliefs and statues the vanquished Dacians in costumes exactly like those worn to this day by the Roumanian peasantry.

The Roman colonization and influence went so deep that ten centuries of invasions and dark ages were unable to destroy it, and in Gibbon's words, "The Wallachians still preserve many traces of the Latin language, and have boasted in every age of their Roman

descent. They are surrounded by, but not mixed with, Barbarians." Considering Gibbon's usual contempt of nationalistic claims, this phrase confirms the tradition that, after Emperor Aurelian withdrew the regular occupation troops (A.D. 271), the settlers retired to the mountains where they maintained their language and habits until they descended to reconquer the Wallachian or Roumanian plains.

These people were converted to Christianity by Byzantine priests and thrived until the fall of their religious suzerain, the Greek Orthodox Emperor of Constantinople. But after the Turkish conquest in 1453 things changed for the worse, and during four hundred years of constant wars and revolts my country became the battlefield of the East. Overrun in turn by Russian, Tartar, Polish, Austrian, and, above all, Turkish armies, in struggles so numerous and bloodthirsty that they fill volumes of chronicles and gave birth to a magnificent folklore of heroic legends, it is a miracle that the race survived at all.

Whatever Roumania's varying political frontiers may have been, or will be, her natural limits are, on the east and west, the rivers Dniester and Tisza, on the north and south the slopes of the Maramuresh mountains, the Danube, and the Black Sea.

Between these natural boundaries stretch the rich, golden fields of my country, divided on practically its whole length by the tall chain of the Carpathian Alps, which separate the low fertile plains of Wallachia and Moldavia from the higher volcanic plateaus of Transylvania. With their pine forests and high, rocky peaks reaching well over eight thousand feet, the Carpathians may well be called the backbone of Roumania. This great curved arc of mountains, extending north almost into the Polish marshes, and southward past the Iron Gates into the Balkans, is physically, geographically, and in a large measure, culturally, the dividing wall between West and East. From the Carpathians to the Russian Urals, unbroken by even the ripple of a hill, reign the wind-beaten steppes. . . .

Geologically, these mountains are largely of the Tertiary period, including the comparatively recent volcanic outbursts on their western flank. They hold extraordinary and still partly unexploited mineral wealth. Our oil fields and refineries—the largest in Europe—have been front-page news. Coal and iron are plentiful. Our gold and silver mines were generally the objective of ancient conquerors, but have lost their importance. In the Bihor Valley are large deposits of bauxite, prospected only in 1905, which might be interesting in these days of airplanes and fashionable aluminum. And the Slanic salt mines, still primitively worked, can never lose their importance to Europe.

Running almost parallel to the Carpathians but some one hundred and thirty miles south is Roumania's main waterway, the Danube. Including the Rhine and Volga, this is still by far the largest European river. Its economic and commercial importance has been stressed in all the peace treaties and numerous trade agreements signed during the past hundred and twenty years, and the river is still a bone of contention.

The Danube enters Roumania at Baziash, piercing its winding track through the cliffs of the Cazane Passes and the so-called "Iron Gates." Emerging tumultuous and foaming from the straits, the river's waters lazily stretch through the flatlands, widening to over three miles, furnishing the most convenient transport route for these agriculturally important regions.

I suppose that, except for one who, like myself, loved and depended on it, the Danube is during the main part of its course a dreary stream of grayish water, calm and silvery in the summer, solidly frozen for many winter months, and a raging menace in the spring. Only much farther near the river port of Galatz, does it divide into three branches, forming the famous Danube Delta, whose characteristic beauty, vegetation, and multifarious variety of birds and game—making it a paradise for the hunter—are compared to those of China.

For Roumania, the Danube is an all important factor; economic and agricultural life practically depend on its course and the quality or length of its yearly floods. These can be as violent and destructive as American tornadoes. In the spring, when the thaw sets in, the unleashed might of the swelling waters rolling in uncontrolled fury, uprooting trees, carrying away houses and crops, can mean ruin to the riparians. The shadow of famine, the pale-faced famine of the poor, always lies over our threatened lowlands, on which the waters often linger for long weeks, destroying the agricultural hopes for the year. A serious financial setback to the landowner, such floods can prove disastrous even to the government of a country whose abundant crops are, with oil, its main export.

Should the flood be a passing one and the torrents recede to their normal flow, the redeemed lands, above and near the Danube banks, will be extraordinarily fertile and rich. Corn will lift its heavy golden ears in the torrid summer glow; sunflower fields, extending over hundreds of acres, raise brilliant heads to the kiss of the sun; pale green oats, blue flowered flax, tall maize, even the boring sugar beet in the marshes, will yield a plentiful harvest. Provided, however, that rain falls in good time, hail clouds are lenient, winds moderate, and the sun not too scorchingly hot; otherwise, as all farmers know, the best of husbandry is helpless against the element's decrees. In our peasants' words, "We live with our eyes fixed on the sky."

Although from my earliest childhood I spent whatever time was permitted with the peasants on our estates and knew more of them and their way of life than any other member of my family, it was not until many years later, when my own life and circumstances had greatly altered, that I really came to understand and appreciate our country people. For nearly twenty years between the two world wars I shared their anguish, excitement, joys, and despairs during the long span of my agricultural venture. I, too, felt my heart singing on bright, happy mornings when the rising sun sparkled on a pink Danube glimpsed through the trembling, silvery willows

that fringed the weary waters; or felt my heart sink while watching crops and hopes being carried away on the crest of furious waves.

Nesting amidst fruit trees and low vineyards on a sloping hill above the Danube bank, the simple thatched cottage, with dried mud walls and earthenware peasant stove I occupied when on my agricultural inspections had no amenities whatsoever but a lovely view extending far beyond the river, which here formed our frontier to the plains of Bulgaria. Later, I had alterations made to my tiny house, for comfort's sake, but never changed its primitive appearance, a reminder of my beginnings as a farmer.

It had taken almost a revolution to start me working personally on the land. It was only in 1920, after the Roumanian Government had decreed a drastic, if probably necessary, law almost totally expropriating the big landowners, that, believing us to be potentially ruined, I decided to try and farm myself the land left me. This was an estate—Cocargea by name, and a very large one—that Grandfather Kazotti had bought at a low price as a safe investment but never once visited. Instead, he had rented it for a fixed yearly sum on a very long lease to a sort of Greek farmers' trust. I naturally turned to this estate still comprising fourteen thousand acres of partly flooded, completely neglected land, never before properly cultivated and deemed so utterly unsuited for agriculture that the competent official experts in charge of applying the expropriation law did not judge it expedient or useful to hand it over to the peasants, who were the natural beneficiaries of the law.

I then set to work on an almost hopeless job that was totally new to me. I had some experience of diking and enlisted the help of famous engineers, who did much to render the marshland available for crops. After that I planned, planted, hoped, plowed, and sowed, despaired and reaped, until I finally managed to make the estate not just an exciting hobby but a well-paying proposition. By the time political circumstances compelled me to sell the property by proxy in 1940, it was the best-run farm in the region and some of

my experiments had actually created precedents. For instance, I was the first farmer in Roumania to succeed in growing two crops on the same land in one year. I felt this was quite an achievement for one lacking any special agricultural training!

I had gathered a fairly competent staff around me, but I owed much of my success to the cooperation, understanding, and good will of the peasantfolk on my estate. They never undermined my work, nor shirked hard strenuous labor. I pride myself as having often been treated by them as one of their own—a great compliment, for the Roumanian peasant is a lord in his way, my equal in many instances, and sometimes my better, despite poverty and great lack of education, for which he is but partly responsible.

We understood each other, spoke the same language—and not only where the love of the land was concerned—for our peasant's vocabulary is the purest in the realm. I probably owe this understanding to my faraway childhood in Maneshti, where, unlike my aloof grandparents, I knew and liked the villagers. To all the people on my former estates I shall remain eternally indebted and attached.

I have experienced and shared their passionate feelings, their strong loves, and their hatreds. Their violent reactions are instinctively mine. I have danced their popular dances, drunk their strong drinks, partaken of their long winter evening parleys—*shezatoare* [literally, sitting parties]—where ancient legends are wound into modern stories, old folk songs sung, village gossip or the last election and the scanty help given by the local member of Parliament discussed. Their childish primitiveness, their weaknesses, their greatness, too, I knew well.

Long are the cold winter evenings in Roumania, long and bleak, with nothing to do but spin and talk. So in one of the small village huts a meeting gathers. From the open terrace [*prispa*] supported by rough wooden pillars, you enter, through a narrow door, straight into the one and only room, its two small windows solidly pasted up for the whole length of the winter. Roumanian peasants don't

believe in fresh air or baths, except river swimming in hot weather. Nor are they much bothered by evil smells or even vermin, yet their shirts and white felt trousers are spotlessly clean, because to that their womenfolk see.

The room is fairly large and scantily furnished; the air thick with smoke so that it takes a few minutes to distinguish the crouching figures in the dim lamp light. The large stove or hearth, carefully whitewashed, holds a blazing log fire fed with dry corncobs which throw out bright sparks like minute fireworks into the high chimney. Carved and painted wooden chests serve both as benches and for storing clothes and rugs. The beds, at most two for the whole family, are just low divans, covered with home-woven rugs, sheepskins, and a profusion of embroidered cushions. By day, they are used as sofas, since chairs are practically nonexistent. A few low tables complete the furniture.

The older women spin, weave, or busy themselves with some of the elaborate silk and gold needlework for which they are renowned. The men do nothing, smoking endless cigarettes which they roll as they talk; no pipe is ever seen in the countryside, this English importation being a privilege of the upper classes. All wear national costume, made of home-woven materials. Married women always keep their heads covered with a kerchief tightly knotted under the chin with no hair showing. Their shirts and jackets are high collared; nothing is seen of their skin but their tired hands and prematurely aging faces. Girls wear open, richly embroidered blouses with short puffy sleeves, their necks and wrists covered with gaily colored beads or precious coin necklaces, gold rings in their ears, and a bright flower tucked behind the left ear near the thick braids encircling their well-shaped heads. When quite young they can be extremely pretty, but hard work and innumerable children, or miscarriages, seem to destroy their looks shortly after marriage, which usually occurs at sixteen or seventeen. I have never heard of a village spinster. The fact that men are in the majority all over

the country eliminates that risk. Nunneries are there to receive those disinclined to wed.

I was never aware when entering a Roumanian peasant gathering of any embarrassment, disapproval, or shyness on the part of any member of the audience. Class consciousness, as such, does not exist in the country. It may be found in the suburban middle classes, not in the village folk. They resented the landowner only if he was the wrong sort or too exacting to the laborer. But with their traditional "boyar" they are perfectly at ease, almost on an equal footing, except for leading different lives. The remark, "You who dwell in town have it easier than we," was often made to me without any derogatory implication. At Sunday dances, I would quite simply be drawn into the *hora* or *sârba*, whose immutably slow steps I practiced since childhood. If by chance I walked into a village pub, or *crisma*, all present (solely men) would get up, greet me with the traditional, "I kiss your hand," then add, "Will you have a drink with us?" It would have been a grievous insult for me to refuse.

The same classical "hand kiss" greeted my arrival if ever I attended some winter-evening village gathering. Talk hardly stopped, but with innate tact the gathering might alter the conversation's topic, adapting it to my ignorance of recent local gossip. My double-faced fur coat would be laid aside on a heap with the mens' sheepskins and the women's wild-fox-lined coats. My high, felted leather boots removed, my pointed Astrakan cap and mufflers thrown off, I would sit down, eager to listen to the tales I knew would soon come. Should I venture to break the unwritten law and light a cigarette—that male privilege? Having already shown my bare head, perhaps I could dare this next exception, but this only after my marriage. As a girl, I myself was forbidden to smoke. Sweet Turkish coffee might be offered around with perhaps a spoonful of rose jam and a glass of iced water. Strong drinks are never served in peasant houses, except if, having lost your way, you ask for shelter on a

freezing night, for each household keeps a few bottles of strong plum brandy, *tsuica*, our national drink—very similar to Polish *starka*, Servian *shlibovitz*, or Russian *vodka*.

Suddenly a fresh young male voice would rise. Turning to one of the older women, a dark-eyed lad would ask, "Baba Lina, won't you tell us one of your beautiful long tales?"

Maica draga [dear little mite], naturally I will if everybody agrees, but you must tell me which of my tales you want to hear. You know them all, and I am too old to invent new ones. Besides I could never invent anything as beautiful as our ancestral tales. They go back to my grandmother's grandmother, and so on to the very beginning of the days. Which do you want?"

Ten voices, shrill or mellow, strong or subdued. . . . "I want the song of Stephen the Great's mother sending him back to battle, to win or die."

"Me, the story of the lovely Princess in love with the morning star, and what happened when her dream came to life."

"Give us the tale of the fair maiden who died twice for the sake of her love."

"Let us hear about the valiant Voivod, who slew three dragons and freed the Princess and the land from the clutches of the mighty magician."

"Better tell us true facts, how the Red Forest gained its name when Vlad Voda, the Cruel, impaled the Pasha and his heathen Turks on the high branches of its trees."

"No, no—that is much too gruesome. I want to know how Prince Charming appeared on a rainbow to rescue his lady love detained by the old sorcerer in the bowels of the earth, and turned all her tears into beautiful rows of fine pearls."

"Why not the story of the girl with the coral beads which were transformed into a flaming rose bush and burned to death the wicked witch who had changed her lover into a cowardly sheep?"

"We want a story of wars and glamorous battle . . . No!—love, and tears, and joy". . . .

"Silence!" said a decided, musical voice. "I am the youngest and I am in love, and I want to know how I must drink unpolluted water at midnight, and what magic words I must speak to bring back on a cloud my love who has sallied abroad."

The time had come at last for me to express my opinion, and the incantation the girl Stanca was asking for seemed full of charming promise. So, after a short moment of hesitation, I insisted—and Baba Lina started. . . .

"Be she maiden, wife, or widow, the woman who wants her love to come back to her must have a pure mind and a clean body. Nor must she wish for the man or boy who, in God's eye and will, belongs to another; for the waters of the stream will turn from their course to drown her, and the fire of the woods will spread to burn her, and the smells of the earth will become sulphur fumes and choke her.

"But if her intentions be straight, honest her wish, and wedlock her aim, then nought can harm her, and this is what she must infallibly do to redeem soul and body of the one she desires. May it be a full-moon night, in the middle of its course, so that the moon shines in full at the first stroke of midnight. During the daytime she must discover and make sure of the quietness and secrecy of a stream of fresh water coming from a mountain spring. May it be as quiet as the deer's pace, as clear as the vulture's eye, as cold as the snake's blood. In the twilight, after watching the sun set beneath the far horizon, yet before the rise of the pale one who lights the darkness, let her pace the scented meadows and pick the seven sacred herbs I will secretly name to her. May she also have the pure fat of a turkey cock's gullet and a neat bowl never profaned by uncleanly uses. On a fire of charcoal obtained from the burning of strong, old oak wood—so she may gather the strength of this king of trees—let her melt the fat and bruise the herbs, speaking

the chosen words, so she may produce an ointment subtle and smooth, sweet-smelling and of a pleasing color. Then may she quietly wait for the night to darken and the moon to rise. Carrying the ointment and a comb and a new silver coin, let her go to the chosen spot on the clear stream's bank. There, hidden by the growth of the weeping willows, she shall strip as nude and naked as her mother made her, the whole length of her hair unloosened and displayed on her back. But beware, oh! beware! of any human being seeing her with his eyes, hearing her with his ears, or being aware of her by any of his senses. If any mortal know of her act, then the spell will be broken and nothing will she achieve.

"When the last stroke of the midnight bells fade out of hearing, and naked as she must be, let her comb her long black hair and three times call, 'Beloved, come back to me,' each time naming him by name. Then may she anoint her body with the magic unguent, again calling three times for her man, calling him to her side, to her love, to her bed. Then may she throw her silver coin into the rapid stream and step in herself, stoop and bathe in the cold running waters. And so may her wish be fulfilled, and her heart and bed empty no more. . . ."

She stopped. Spellbound, her audience remained silent. Vague visions of naked virgins haunted the men; every woman felt she might some day need to cast this powerful spell on someone. Not a word! Smoke and heat, forgotten for a time, became again noticeable. Stanca, at last asked, "And if he does not come back?"

"If you have done your magic stuff with good belief and properly, *he will come*. But if he resist, or the other one's magic is more potent for evil than yours for good, then he shall die in horrid torture and pain. That is sure. . . ."

So the final cruelty of simple races had pierced the coating of idealism and superstition I had first perceived. Death and pain, the last conclusion.

Lights were burning low, it was late. The sitting was over, and

we would set off into the starlit frozen night. Slowly, heavily, quietly, the snow had been falling all day, blanketing the earth with an icy white down, covering roads and tracks with its unbroken, glistening weight. Now the weather had cleared; frost-covered trees cast their pale shadows on the deep blue sky; the shimmer of the snow lightened the darkness. Half the villagers would help me to wade my way home, knee-deep in snow.

Tomorrow we would have to start out with a small sleigh and try to trace a track through the heavy snowfall's depth. Did the winds not set in, this could be an agreeable occupation; and if the telephone wires were not torn down, we might get in touch with the town and find out whether trains run, or whether we are snowed in. For how long? Who can tell?

The winds that blast the plain are violent and lasting. Three days, six days, nine days, is the average in our climate of extreme contrasts. Summers are scorching, without a breath of air to freshen the hot close nights; winters bitterly cold. For months the snow lies, three or four feet deep, slowing down the pace of life, wrapping the dormant vegetation in its soft glittering folds. One would imagine the earth was frozen down to its very bowels. Yet roots keep alive, seeds and bulbs nestle in the soil ready to bud and flower at the first sign of thaw. Spring sets in suddenly without a warning, as lightning in a cloudless sky. The melting snows vanish under the first hot rays of a glaring sun; the land emerges clad with the green carpet of its future crops. From hour to hour one literally can see trees and bushes sprouting, budding, and bursting out in a blaze of varnished young leaves. In a matter of days, summer is here—hot, dry, annihilating your energies, softening your brain to its melting point, turning to fire the very air you breathe. Nights are cooler and clear. Only then is outdoor life enjoyable. So you dine in the open and linger late, taking your real rest during your daytime siesta.

Autumn is the only kind, moderate season, restful and happy. Its radiant golden beauty is unparalleled. The air is hazy and

transparent. The sky, white with glowing heat in June and July, becomes in September a soft velvety blue. The nights are light, striped with the sparks of falling stars, the Milky Way shining like a satin scarf across the cloudless sky.

The hard work of harvesting and threshing is by now well over. Alone remains the picking of the slowly ripening vines. The warm, juicy grapes, weighing down their stems, are thrown into the large barrel, where they will be crushed by barefoot peasants, then left to ferment in the open. Blazing pyramids of bright, yellow Indian corn cobs brilliantly dot the heavy brown soil, already torn up by the deep furrows of the first autumn plowing. Reluctantly, woods and parks revert to their rusty autumn dress, varying from light gold to dark shiny copper, deep crimson, or dull fawn brown. This is a season of plenty, calm, and achievement: the one and only time in the year when the climate is soothing and the farmer can rest, his task finished in success or defeat. Now is the hour to plan and hope, without fever or struggle, for the storms and sweats of the coming year.

The fall stretches out, mild and peaceful until late in December, when the snows' wintry blasts begin to threaten again. So goes the chain of seasons, colorful, changing. This is no country of moderation and balance.

Extreme, like climate and nature, with sharp shadows and lurid colors, are the inhabitants. Feelings run high, strong passions reign. Immoderate in their desires, wild in their ways and modes of life, the Roumanians are almost as unaccountable, unexpected, and violent as the surroundings and the traditions which have produced and molded their national characteristics. Their language holds no word for "self-control," the term and idea being equally untranslatable and alien to a Roumanian mind. Voices are loud and piercing; exaggeration in gesture and expression are so current that they pass unnoticed. Quarrels are quickly picked, usually ending in gross personal insult, as swiftly forgotten as uttered. A fight may occa-

sionally ensue, and none can foresee whether it will end in bloodshed, a duel, or in an explosion of wild, uncontrolled laughter. Overstatement is the rule; wit is quick and sharp. Ideas are rapidly grasped; the answer usually comes before you have had time to finish your sentence, and it comes sparkling, argumentative, brilliant like the flash of a dagger—but the blow somehow misses its aim. The excitement of speech has blunted the edge of the all-too-quick answer. The time was too short to build up a carefully thought-out chain of reasoning, and accuracy was sacrificed to speed or brilliance. This stands true for the whole of the population.

The accelerated tempo and resounding tones, accompanied by impulsive movements, in which the most indifferent conversation was carried on at home used utterly to bewilder me when I returned from England, where subdued speech and understatement prevailed. I am sorry to say that within three days I had picked up my native manner and was just as noisy, quick, and highly strung as my compatriots, who often admitted themselves beaten on their own ground!

Political assassinations, *crimes passionnels*, or suicide are anything but unusual: burglary and murder for theft, quite rare. Along with local politics, love and love-making are the great occupation and preoccupation of all classes of society. Passionate, violent, and usually short-lived affairs are so numerous and intricate that, unless you live on the spot, it is difficult to keep track of the unending intrigues of ones' friends. For me, who spent half the year abroad, the task was practically impossible, and each time I came home I was sure to make some inexcusable faux pas, asking the wrong people together to my parties. Public gossip and helpful friends would ironically put me straight in a very short time!

Morality has never been a strong point with my compatriots, but they can boast of charm and beauty, wit, fun, and intelligence. Life was too free in a rich and easy-going country to breed rigid principles. The extraordinary facility of divorce in the past, as well as in

the present, somewhat shattered the sanctity of matrimony and the strength of family ties. Divorce is customarily granted on grounds of incompatibility or simply mutual consent, entailing no blame or evidence for any of the parties. By courtesy of the court, the decree is usually granted to the woman; no alimony is ever paid; the children, except in cases of previous agreement between parents, are supposed to spend six months with the father—the rest with their mother.

The disapproval of the Church, which might have made divorce less popular, is lacking. One can get married up to three times in church, the service being slightly shorter each time. A fourth religious blessing can occasionally be obtained, perhaps somehow by fluke, as in the case of a well-known Roumanian lady who, while undergoing her third religious ceremony was mildly warned by the officiant, "My daughter, don't forget this is the last time."

"Oh, no, my Father," came the prompt reply, "my first husband was my cousin, and we omitted to obtain a dispensation, so he does not count."

This leniency of the Church does much to set consciences at ease in the lower classes and villagers who are more superstitious, if not more truly religious, than the upper ones. My Granny's deep faith was an exception in her world, due, I imagine, to education in a Roman Catholic country; for Roumanians are as indifferent to their own creed as they are incapable of dogmatic controversies. Going to church is, with those who attend mass, more of a social duty than a religious one, and in the countryside attendance is very scarce. Nobody reads the Bible, although some may know the Gospels; but religious superstition, nearly akin to magic, rules the peasantry without preventing sin.

Students and members of the enlightened middle classes habitually affected atheism and would seldom bother with a church marriage, although they were always baptized. Low morality and casual drunkenness among the secular married clergy had, for over a century, discouraged faith in all classes. Standards were higher among monks

out of whose ranks the convent primates, bishops, and metropolitans are chosen, but here politics, fairly prevalent with the regular clergy, have been a regrettable element of corruption.

The rapidity and cheapness of Roumanian divorce never ceased to amaze me. One of my maids obtained hers in two months at the cost of a bare twenty-five dollars. With her second divorce, my daughter, then aged twenty-two, scored even better. Within six weeks her case had gone through all the stages of legal procedure without herself even once appearing in court. There were comparatively few divorces in my family, at least in my generation, but of all the other women of my age—the girls who came out in my day—only three have remained wedded to the original husband with whom they started life. My own marriage, lasting over thirty choppy years, was quite an exception, viewed indifferently, without approval or criticism. Roumania gossips, but rarely blames.

Once, however, I witnessed Bucharest society being shattered when, in a drunken moment, a well-known young man set ablaze the sequined dress of his mistress in a night club. She was almost instantaneously burned to death, and her lover, an officer, shot himself with his regulation revolver in front of the speechless husband. Admittedly this was spectacular enough to create a sensation.

Alternating strong passions and Eastern apathy give my country its marked personality and the penetrating, destructive, yet potent charm of which most foreigners are strongly aware. Only few, after months or years spent in Roumania, could leave without a feeling of regret for this carefree atmosphere of lovely facile women, enterprising men, and a keen sense of amusement unbound by prejudice. Outpost of the Orient, we carry its dangerous attractions; bastion of the West, the burdens of civilization weigh heavily on a still newly developed population. The slack moral standards are equally true of the middle classes and peasantry. Here is no case of "rotten upper classes" but of general outlook on life, which may vary in form, not in degree, for the cities, the villages, and the slums.

Provincial towns copy the capital, and there is little contrast to Bucharest's alleged corruption. Provincial puritanism, often met elsewhere, is nonexistent in Roumania. I cannot remember having heard the word used otherwise than in its historical connection, say in regard to Cromwell's Britain or the settlements in America. It has nothing to do with my country.

In villages the trend of life may be somewhat different. Enduring extramarital affairs are unusual among the peasants, but rough and tumble cases, if I may so put it, are anything but rare. Girls are not often virgins; and I know of some Moldavian villages where, in the procession which takes newly married couples all round the main road the day after their wedding, a sort of herald precedes the bridal cart and carries a bottle of wine: white if the girl was a virgin, red otherwise. In my cousins' memory, on whose estate such a village lay, and in mine, we never saw the white wine appear, and no one in the crowd seemed astonished.

My comparative awareness of public disapproval made me an anomaly in my country, often leading me to misjudge situations. Thus, when about sixteen years ago a great friend of mine, prominent in public life, told me he intended to divorce his second wife—who was a hopelessly boring but most respectable creature—to marry the clever, delightful consort of one of his political followers, I was frightened to distraction by the prospect of his endangering a steadily rising career.

"But, my dear," said I, "this is sheer madness. The Liberal party will never accept you—its leader—indulging in such public scandal. A double divorce case will prove too much, even for our lax public opinion. Think it over, please."

"It is all thought over, Anne-Marie, I can't live without her any more. You, one of my best friends, ought to know better, to help and encourage me."

"That is what I am trying to do. You ought to know better than let yourself be carried away by your emotions. I am aware that this

is a long-lasting affair and that you are in love like a mere boy, but couldn't you go on as you are—not make it public and obvious?”

He would not listen to reason. His wife dragged him down, and he would be politically wrecked anyhow, would go mad or something. We argued in vain. I was not even on speaking terms with his wife, and this ought to have given my pleading for a delay some weight, but I failed to impress him. Nothing in my own life entitled me, he thought, to be so stuffy. He could not see my point and we almost quarreled.

It was a miracle our solid friendship resisted this crisis. Divorces and marriage took place, the story became public, nobody stirred. . . . Less than eighteen months later Jean Duca became Prime Minister, with the Liberal party, in a body, standing behind him. I was baffled and belatedly realized that I was decidedly alien to my own country's code of morals.

When, shortly after forming his Government and obtaining an overwhelming majority in perfectly free elections, Jean Duca met his violent death, it was due to his rigid political principles, not his emotional private life. . . . His assassination was the first of a long string of crimes perpetrated by the Nazi-inspired “Iron Guard.” Today this whole murderous organization has turned Communist. . . .

Jean Duca's political straightness and outstanding honesty were a great bond, for in this respect he was an exception in our country. Not a unique one, far from it, yet a rarity. Here again my own people's misinterpretation of my views upset me not a little. If I could easily accept their moral standards, which I subconsciously shared, many other things they lightly accepted shocked me deeply: such as, for example, graft on a large scale, political reprisals, and dubious business transactions so often carried out under my eyes or even offered to me as “legal” in some of my agricultural dealings.

“But, Madame,” my administrator would occasionally tell me, “you have only given your answer by telephone, but signed nothing.

Now we have a much better offer, you can call the deal off; the buyer holds no proof."

This would infuriate me. My word was as good as my signature, and I would have belittled myself by agreeing to compromise. Besides, I not only disapprove of crookedness but am convinced it is bad policy in the long run. No use to quote Lincoln's famous sentence, which happens to be remarkably true but rarely applied in Roumania: they would try to fool everybody all the time. The bad name my country has acquired on those lines is due to such behavior. I felt I was no more in tune with my compatriots and, even worse, I was convinced that I was right.

Such criticisms on the part of a native like myself were unpardonable because they somehow hit a sensitive spot. Roumanians might laugh off political and administrative graft, or even call it shrewdness, yet vaguely realized this was a mistaken attitude.

Because of my criticisms, and the outspoken manner in which I uttered them, society found me haughty and I daresay disliked me, albeit accepting my invitations. I had and hope I still have devoted friends, but I somehow no longer fitted into my country's framework. I was estranged everywhere but in the plains and fields, which offered no blame, only work, peace, and beauty.

Abroad, too, I was a stranger, but here I quite consciously acted the part. My foreign origin is blatant, however internationally minded life may have made me. My physical appearance, my whole mental make-up, belong to my country, to its fundamentals past and present, to those traits that circumstances may alter but not really change. It takes centuries to alter the deep characteristics of a race, and to mine I am linked by heredity, language, and childhood surroundings. Whatever my subsequent revolts and disapprovals, my roots are there.

Bucharest 1896-1905

My father had a poodle, a perfectly lovely, well-trimmed poodle, complete with cuffs and bouffets. He was my childhood's best friend, and responded to the symbolic name of Negro. We shared games and fun, but his was an odd life. The nights and early mornings he spent at our house, but the daytime belonged to the middle-aged, stoutish, tall, and still handsome French *cocotte* imported by my Papa, who kept her on quite a lavish scale.

The lady happened to take her constitutional stroll on the fashionable promenade, the *Chaussée Kisseleff*, at the very same hour my Nanny took me out for my morning walk. Admittedly, it was a tricky business to make a baby understand that, having shared breakfast and quarreled all morning over odd bits of sugar with darling Negro, I had to ignore him when he ran along with his mistress—who unluckily happened to be my father's too! Naturally, when he saw me on the *Chaussée*, Negro went into raptures; so did I and, as a result, became quite friendly with the famous lady. Havoc and drama ensued when these happenings came to my grandmother's ears, and I got a terrible and mysterious warning about the dreadful future I was preparing for myself if I went on behaving "wrongly." I could not understand and cried at this, my first unsavory meeting with social prejudice.

Many others were to follow, but I never became reconciled to conventions of any sort.

In this particular instance, my poor grandmamma's qualms soon ended as, shortly after my fifth birthday, darling Negro was run over in Paris by the horse-drawn Madeleine-Bastille bus.

Of my father's rather loud feminine affairs and scandals I was aware since my earliest childhood, and some were not as simple as the poodle interlude. The ups and downs of his fortunes and adventures, somehow woven into the quiet pattern of my nursery days, made my life at times quite lively. The echoes of his successes thrilled me just as much as his rare appearances in the peaceful quarters allotted to me in the oddly shaped house we occupied in Bucharest.

It was only after my return from several years spent abroad that I began to appreciate the quaint charm of my native city. Looking back to my youth, I realize how Eastern those long, ill-paved, winding, little streets must have been, with their rows of small, white-washed houses set sideways, their entrances opening not on the curb but on the rather narrow strip of garden adjoining each of them. Far behind lay a back yard, full of chickens and perhaps an occasional pig. Town households were then almost as self-supporting as their owner's country places. Even in 1921, when I returned to Roumania with my children after a five-year absence in France, I had a cow grazing in my walled kitchen garden, the wilderness of my childhood games of hide-and-seek.

The center of the city might rise into ten-story buildings, yet in the poorer quarters, the "Devil's slums" behind my house, street vendors still carried on their shoulders the traditional, queer wooden yokes to which were variously attached baskets full of the season's fruit, hampers of live, squeaking fowls, pointed cardboard containers spilling away half their load of peanuts or pistachios—or it might have been candies and delicious national pastries, occasionally accompanied by canisters of a squeamishly sweet honey drink called *braga*.

The carrier's silent barefoot steps were inaudible, but one knew

the quality of his wares, not by unintelligible words, but by the pitch of shrillness in which they were shouted. Fruit, for instance, was advertised in much lower tones than chickens. Drink was heralded in a peculiar note of its own. But by far the loudest, most penetrating cry was that of the "old rags" vendor.

Nor had the lovely gypsy flower girls changed since my childhood, crouching near their fragrant wicker crates, showing their unrivaled white teeth. No visiting painter or photographer ever missed this opportunity. Long lines of beautifully colorful Oltenian and Bessarabian rugs still hung on the railings by the ugly embankment of the muddy Dambovitza, running a thin stream over the stones of its half-empty bed. Still there, too, were the open-air markets, varied and noisy like Asiatic *souks*, and equally addicted to frenzied bargaining. Picturesque Bucharest had not changed in twenty-five years.

The house of my birth and childhood, in which I continued to live intermittently until 1940 when I left my country, stood almost on the outskirts of the city, on the fashionable promenade, familiarly called "La Chaussée" by Bucharest's inhabitants. This wide alley, overshadowed by four rows of lime trees, and bordered with private houses set in spacious gardens was invaded on Sundays by holiday-makers and long lines of carriages driving their overdressed inmates to the racecourse or some garden party in the neighborhood.

In fact, during my early youth a daily parade of elegant horse-drawn open carriages enlivened, between five and seven o'clock, the otherwise peaceful Chaussée Kisseleff. At slow pace, gaily dressed ladies and their dandified escorts drove up the large avenue, bowing right and left, smiling, gossiping, criticizing, and showing off. Dashing young bachelors in hired cabs sped rapidly past at the full pace of the long-tailed, long-maned, Orloff thoroughbreds for which Bucharest was almost as famous as Petersburg. Many a Bucharest flirtation or love affair had started by some unforeseen or well-planned meeting during these fashionable *paseos*.

On warm spring afternoons, it was my childish joy to watch this

daily pageant; and at the age of seven I most imaginatively fell in love with a bearded cousin of my father's, whom, incidentally, ten years later I declined to marry.

This street gazing was not benevolently viewed by Granny, who always feared some unknown danger for my morals or my safety. The latter seemed a superfluous anxiety, for, in a traditional Roumanian way, the house was well guarded by two Albanian watchmen, who stood day and night in attendance near the gates. Their costume, subdued to a simple livery after my marriage, was at the time a flash of color and gold braid; their tall red boots, scarlet velvet vests heavily embroidered, soft white linen shirts, tasseled tarbooshs, and black, puffy trousers, were as conspicuous as could be, but they never struck me as such, being part of our habitual routine, and no exception in our town.

Architecturally speaking, our house appeared more like a magnified French suburban villa than a palatial residence. It was nothing but a one-storied, fairly small building when my maternal grandfather bought it for his beloved daughter as a temporary abode until she had time to erect the stately mansion in keeping with her new status as wife of the scion and last heir to one of Roumania's oldest and best-known names.

Yet fate gave her no time to fulfill this luxurious intention. She died before her future house was anything more than a drafted blueprint. Left to his own devices, and leading an independent life, my father soon abandoned the idea and instead enlarged and patched up, more or less successfully, 17 Chaussée Kisseleff. Large sums had been spent on these alterations, but little taste was lavished on the outside or on the interior decoration of the villa.

For a city dwelling, the grounds surrounding it were enormous, well over two acres, but as a garden it was badly laid out, tatty in design and upkeep. An oval, stone-paved pool surrounded with scraggy rose trees and various bushes formed the entrance centerpiece, around which a curved double drive led to the entrance door.

The rest of the garden had a few flower beds, uneven bits of grass (I could not venture to call them lawns), some lovely old trees, a tennis court overshadowed by tall lilac bushes, and a back-yard wilderness constituting the paradise of my rare children's parties. Rusty, unattractive railings hardly protected my games and outdoor exertions from the curiosity of casual passers-by.

In its own peculiar way, the house was as unforeseeable as the garden, and almost impossible to describe. The whole right side bulged unexpectedly to give room for the entrance halls, each of them on a different level. In continuation of this advanced structure was a small stone balcony adjoining the study and built in the hope of balancing the façade which, on the left, suddenly receded at an odd angle, this last wall being pierced by a very large window of a completely different shape than the one above.

Finally, the large terrace on the first floor overlooking the entrance was quite nice, but rarely used, because it opened on a bedroom rendering its access awkward at many an hour of the day. The only remedy I later found to alleviate some of my house front's faults was to enroll the help of clinging vines. An enormous wisteria, almost as lovely as those growing in Istanbul, practically concealed the more ungainly aspects of the building.

The interior was equally weird. The rooms were of irregular shapes as, for instance, the semicircular library into which an extraordinary but rather attractive half-moon-like bookcase reaching to the ceiling had been built. This funny room adjoined the perfectly regular study opening on the right of the hall, if I can thus call a room so narrow in comparison with its length that it seemed more of a corridor than a reception room.

The drawing room was vast, about fifty-six feet long, adequately wide, with cut-off angles, lending it an octagonal appearance. The nearby *petit salon* was round, which made it charming but difficult to furnish. The dining room, seating twenty people with ease, was the best proportioned room in the house, but commanded by the

drawing room and three steps lower; these steps created a hazard in the days of long trains and very high heels. Heavily molded Victorian ceilings and dark painted walls were the greatest decorative drawback of this floor.

The main oaken staircase, surging from the left side of the hall, led to the first floor, well in keeping with the illogical scheme of the whole house. Narrow passages linked distant bathrooms to the main bedrooms, which were of unequal heights. The whole floor was built on different levels with numerous inner staircases of five or six steps. This unaccountable layout was due to the addition of two stories over the original building, where the main drawing room had a much higher ceiling than the adjoining wings. Also added was a breakneck back staircase, intended for the staff's use. The kitchen was at least a hundred yards distant from the dining room, and was reached through a dark corridor and yet another winding stair.

It was the most impractical and difficult place to run I ever knew. But for the horde of docile Roumanian servants—some twenty-two as I remember—poorly trained but marvelously devoted, full of good will and patience, no one would have accepted the lack of amenities and manifold burdens keeping such a place in good order entailed. Granny's and later my own domestic staff were of invaluable help, friends and towers of strength in times of crisis.

The furniture, I can well recollect, perfectly suited this interior. Chocolate and browns were the dominating colors. Cabinets, sofas, chairs, and tables were sufficiently ugly to justify the subsequent exile they endured at my hand. The heavy plush curtains and elaborate upholstery were in keeping with the taste of the epoch; our house was taxed *de grand luxe*, and nobody appeared to find fault with it, not even my father, who later was to have the most delightful home of his own. In those days, however, he rarely appeared in Bucharest, preferring his gay Paris life to our duller surroundings,

and his sudden arrivals were usually connected with one of the big receptions given at our house.

The most vivid memories of my Bucharest childhood are of the large parties, balls, and suppers which occurred several times during the winter seasons. The closing years of the last century and the early years of this one were still elaborately formal; social programs established months ahead according to weathered conventions were rarely altered. The social life Granny led was intense and complicated.

We regularly came back from the country on the fifteenth of November for the opening of Parliament, as my grandfather was for many years Vice-President of the Senate. Immediately after returning to town, my grandmother started her social activities by dropping cards on at least half of the town's population! All the officials, her elders, and her own generation! The younger people were supposed to drop cards on her. Why this had to be done personally, I always failed to grasp. But such was the rule—and most important, too, was I told in sharp tone. "If you try to be revolutionary, child, it will take you nowhere in life."

So, for several days running, at three o'clock sharp, the French *coupé* drove up to the front door, complete with coachman and tall footman in fur-lined, dark blue livery coats, with velvet collars, crested buttons, and top hats. Granny then appeared, invariably wearing a huge, long, puce velvet cape with a high, stiff *guipure* lace collar, heavily trimmed with the same well-worn sables which lined the whole wrap.

"Sables must last a lifetime" was the slogan. I strongly suspected these of having lasted two!

On her head perched a draped purple bonnet, topped by ostrich-feather tips to match, and kept in place by long silk streamers tied firmly under her chin in a big, flaring bow. Trotting behind came her maid, carrying long sheets of paper covered with names and addresses set, not in alphabetical sequence, but in topographical

order, plus two large cardboard boxes containing the necessary visiting cards. One of my aunts or cousins accompanied Granny on these tedious expeditions. This dubious treat I was denied on account of my subversive ideas and lack of social discipline.

This first duty accomplished, the dinner-party season began and went on all through the last fortnight of November and well into December until Christmas. There were no country Christmas parties in Roumania, because of the bitter cold and lack of communications when the sharp east wind, the *viscol*, blew over the flat, unsheltered plains. Winter sports were not yet in fashion. So the ten days traditionally devoted to children and family parties were spent in town. Except for the age of the guests, those children's gatherings were as conventional as all other entertainments of the period.

A scintillating, overornate Christmas tree, touching the ceiling, surrounded by a display of innumerable presents, was approached with such ceremony and gave scope to so formal festivities that the carefree joy of the holidays was spoiled for me. I developed then, and retained, a violent distaste for all that Christmas paraphernalia.

Granny's parties were quite another matter. Even from a distance, whether as a baby, banished from my accustomed nursery to a top-floor bedroom, or, later, crouched behind a screen in the dining room, I enjoyed immensely everything that had to do with a party. The careful planning and complicated details of the menus; the arguments about rules of precedence in the placing of the guests at table; the subtle choice of the different wines to accompany the rich, sophisticated dishes; the floral arrangements; the display of silver and glittering cut crystal on the lace tablecloth adorned with our coat of arms—these things simply thrilled me.

Her visiting lists completed, my grandmother reverted to those of her potential dinner guests. These included friends or personalities in various positions and walks of life, from prime minister, royalty, metropolitane, and bishops, to my grandfather's shooting partners and all the minor political agents in his constituency. Hundreds

of names, if my memory be true. So, from my youngest days I was alive to all the political and social obligations, electoral combinations, and canvassing, as well as to the religious and charitable activities or sporting connections of my grandparents.

Quite different were the balls given for fun, not duty, which included only the young gay set of the city. These parties entailed vast display and are the earliest I can remember. For such occasions the back terrace was covered and closed up with boards hung with colorful Persian rugs, which concealed their makeshift look, and filled with potted plants and blooming shrubs. In this sort of winter garden, Ciolac's famous gypsy band played all the waltzes and dance tunes and, during the time supper was served, reverted to the heart-rendering, sentimental Roumanian folk songs all adored.

The choicest foodstuffs, French wines, and also the accessories for the *cotillon*, as it was then danced, with various figures requiring fans, paper streamers, funny hats, bags, fancy handkerchiefs, wallets, and other minute gifts for the guests, were all imported straight from Paris by my father, in the Orient Express, the quick trans-continental train (called *Blitz-Zug* by the Germans) which covered the distance in forty-eight hours.

The Vacaresco parties were real events; the whole town attended; royalty rarely missed them. Not the King and Queen, who were not very social, but the Heir Apparent and his lovely young wife, Princess Marie, then almost at the height of her beauty.

Prince (later King) Ferdinand of Roumania was a shy, somewhat clumsy man, in spite of his being a good shot, who never seemed at ease with society women, although he was reputed to frequent, without reluctance, less commendable ones. But in these early years, I believe, he still had eyes only for his radiant wife. The beauty of this granddaughter of Queen Victoria, in whose veins the Russian Romanov blood mingled with the more sedate Coburg strain, has been so widely heralded and described that it would be redundant to repeat. Yet those who have not seen her as a young

woman, well before she ascended the throne, cannot imagine the clear luminosity of her looks.

I knew her all my life, was devoted to her, believe she was the most beautiful woman I ever saw, held her in total admiration, and, whatever her shortcomings, no word of real criticism could fall from my pen. Even her faults, moral or physical, turned out to her advantage; she loved her adopted country, was devoted to its cause, and this won her the unquestioned adoration of her people.

But none of her future political and intellectual achievements were obvious in the young woman of twenty-two or twenty-three who faithfully attended my Granny's parties. She was known to come early, which set the family on tenterhooks lest she arrive before the other guests, and to leave last. "One more dance, Madame Vacaresco, please, I want to have a waltz with Radu," she was known to plead at five o'clock in the morning, when Granny felt near collapsing, while my father had already secretly gone down to the kitchens to order breakfast for the royal party. She was just a very gay young woman, dance-mad at a time when night clubs were nonexistent and large private parties rare. Of course Granny could not refuse.

Princess Marie even made one of her sister's visits to Bucharest coincide with a ball at our house, so she would not miss the event. She was always very well, but most spectacularly, dressed in light tulles or muslins, sequined, embroidered, or covered with feathers. She wore marvellous jewelry, but was supposed to rush quite frequently to rigid King Carol, whose nephew and heir her husband was, begging for payment of the bills which she could not meet because of her very limited dress allowance. Money values she never learned.

The tall, slim, blond, blue-eyed girl (for what else was she?) who so happily danced at Granny's parties was not yet at the height of her looks; only some ten years later did she attain the zenith of her beauty, when, in 1910, she attended King George V's coronation,

and was hailed the loveliest of royal ladies. At her sixtieth birthday, dressed in pale pink and blue, she was still amazing, displaying with ease the graces befitting her age. I well remember her a few years previously when, dining at my house, she smilingly looked at our much altered drawing room, saying, "Anne-Marie, I see you have not changed the patterned parquet floor on which I so often danced when I was your age. How I enjoyed it!"

In fact, she was much younger at the time when I was the baby who, on the nights when she was coming to dance on our parquet floor, was removed from my usual nursery, temporarily transformed into the ladies' cloak and dressing room, and tucked away into one of the back rooms, to avoid being kept awake by the noise and music. A useless precaution as, in any case, I could not sleep for sheer excitement. All day long I had watched the furniture being moved, flowers arranged, tables set and decorated. Later I admired the whole family in their full regalia, and finally had been put to bed, only to lie awake, listening breathlessly to the distant strains of the music downstairs, desperately wishing I were grown up and could join in the fun.

Once I was allowed to share the excitement and this occasion remains one of my most vivid early childhood memories. I could not have been more than five or six at the time.

Sarah Bernhardt was partial to spectacular theatrical tours, which were flattering to her pride and helped alleviate her recurrent financial difficulties. Bucharest was on the list of the European capitals she deigned to visit, and her reception was always tremendous.

On one of these occasions H  l  ne Vacaresco, temporarily in town, gave an afternoon party in honor of her friend, the incomparable Sarah. Forgetting its spite against H  l  ne, social Bucharest was agog, requests for invitations came from all sides. The family council decided I could be produced—my excitement knew no limits. Shy and eager I stood, clasping the lovely bouquet of roses (hothouse blooms for we were in any icy Roumanian January) I was to offer the star.

Breathless, I listened to the conversation of all the dressed-up ladies and impatient male guests. Comments and expectations ran high, the main topic being, "We must take in every detail of her clothes and try to copy them, or get ourselves something similar."

The great Sarah obviously wanted a triumphal entrance. She made us wait long. At last a carriage was heard, a ripple moved the silenced crowd. I stepped forward, and before I even realized what was happening, the lovely scented lady had picked me up in her arms and kissed me, exclaiming, "*Oh, le joli bébé!*"

A minute later she had resumed her regal entrance, talking, smiling, nonchalantly throwing off her superb sable coat to appear in the unique dress no Bucharest *élégante* could copy: a long, sleek tight-waisted gown of pure white ermine, the collar, sleeves, and flaring hem bordered with a deep fringe of tiny black tails. I could think of nothing else, but that I had been kissed by the greatest living actress.

But soon, alas, a great scandal took place which almost put an end to Granny's parties. One night my father's jealous mistress, imagining some marriage arrangements were being planned for him, followed his trail prepared to make a hideous scene. Luckily, one of Papa's friends caught sight of her before she could break into the ballroom and managed, actually helped by the police, to remove her to a hotel, keeping her under lock and key until she was persuaded to take the first available train back to Paris. This rather shattering adventure, overdiscussed, proved fatal to our larger receptions.

Another reason, too, accounted for the collapse of these grand entertainments. My father's unpaid creditors, hopelessly running after their money, decided that this was the moment to come into their own; bailiffs appeared in our lives. And one early winter morning, I was dragged out of bed, quickly wrapped in warm blankets, and carried away to an aunt's house, only a few yards distant from ours. This, however, was not done swiftly enough to prevent my noticing stern, black-clad men on our doorstep, or overhearing the

servants' fantastic tales about the men of law who had come to seal up the premises and auction out the furniture. This happened again frequently, but we were, always at the very last minute, spared the horror of a sale by some timely expedient, usually by sending what remained of my mother's beautiful jewelry to the pawnbrokers, whence it did, or did not, return.

In those early days of my still carefree childhood, queer events struck my imagination, setting it working on unexpected lines. Occasionally, after one of our large parties, or even during quite normal periods, we appeared to go suddenly bankrupt. Half the house became freezing cold, the main sitting rooms were closed, the cook threatened to give notice, everything seemed very incomprehensible and gloomy. Then, after a lot of mysterious whisperings and secret meetings amongst the grownups, things cleared: we were again afloat for a while. It was all very puzzling to a young brain.

Little by little, as I grew up, the intricacies of my father's financial predicament became clearer to me. Full light was thrown upon them once when I was putting order in our lofts and discovered a trunkful of legal documents stating the whole case.

I have already mentioned that Papa, helped by "fast women and slow horses," had gone rapidly through my mother's inheritance, half her fortune to be precise, amounting to some twelve hundred thousand gold francs yearly income.

Once Papa had spent his own share, and even gone into debt, he started dipping just a little into mine, which he managed as my lawful guardian. My grandfather somehow advised him in this shady matter, which might have been most damaging to me but for Roumanian justice which would not tolerate such dealings. A case was brought up by the *Procureur Royal* [Public Prosecutor] against my father, who was declared bankrupt and deprived of his paternal rights and my guardianship. My fortune was then set under trusteeship, and a relative, Uncle John Vacaresco, appointed custodian of

my estates and possessions, which he administered extremely well in an exaggeratedly conservative manner.

Papa's frustrated creditors, however, were always on the alert, and each time our household showed outward signs of prosperity (Granny had a substantial allowance for my education) they promptly attempted to lay hands on some of the money. Hence the bailiffs, threats, and expediences we periodically underwent, for reasons unexplicable to my childish mind.

Small wonder therefore that, when sent after lunch to my room for an hour's rest, I lay alone in silence, trying to grasp the complicated problems of adult life. The task proving impossible, I began to build plans and cherish hopes for a mysterious lovely future. I cannot, in clear detail, remember the visions and hopes my imagination conjured up for me at that early stage. My memory is slightly blurred as to the precise moment when these thoughts took a consistent form in my mind. I now recognize that as a child I lived very much in a world of my own, the untarnished world of my fantasy; I preferred it to the crude harshness of reality. The firm decision to strengthen my will power, in order never to be influenced or misled by others, goes back to my nursery days. Perhaps I have not, all along the intricate road of life, followed the straight line I had drawn for myself in childhood. Love and circumstances have often stood between my cold reason and my emotions, but, never in my wildest hours, have I let anybody judge, think, or finally decide for me.

Summing up my childhood, I am amazed to realize how little the main lines of human nature change in the long course of passing years. If the development and evolution of mind and character have been well and harmoniously guided, sometimes by others, but mainly by one's own will, a really balanced and happy result may be achieved.

This happens to be my pet theory on education. Likening human nature to that of trees or flowers, I maintain that one can alter the fundamentals of neither. You no more can turn an apple tree into

a pear than you can change a poor brain into a thoroughly first-rate one, or transform a cruel disposition into a kindly heart. But wise training of branches or feelings, careful pruning of dead wood or bad instincts, well-planned feeding of the soil on which tree or brain must develop, above all, a discriminating study of their respective tendencies, may bring tree or creature into perfect shape, allowing it to yield the best crop or result that it is able to produce. This theory pleases me, not only by its implications and analogies, but because in practice it is one of the most difficult to apply happily.

An only child, I never resented my loneliness, nor pined for children's companionship. Mine was an isolated childhood; I had few playmates, and never went to school. In this, however, I was no exception in my country, where at the time no adequate girls' schools existed. Few girls of my generation were educated abroad. Home tuition was frequent, and the general standard of feminine culture high.

My case was complicated by Granny's terror of letting me out of her sight, obsessed as she was by the thought I might be kidnapped by some emissary of my father's creditors, whose interest it was to see me disappear. She was sure they had an eye on me because, had I died, he would according to Roumanian law have inherited my fortune—at least until I was of age or emancipated by marriage and could make my will freely.

Granny's fantastic fears were enhanced by a recent event which had shattered Bucharest's society. A child of exactly my age, Catherine Cretzulesco, had mysteriously disappeared, kidnapped by her father's *sbirri* in the course of his resounding divorce from Princess Irene Cantacuzene, and nobody knew whereto she had vanished. Haunted by the wildest visions, Granny had no rest until a private detective, or rather a plain-clothes man, was attached to my steps, but nothing could be more conspicuous and less efficient in appearance than "Fat Georgie," as I called him, following me at very obvious distance.

The whole act was perfectly ludicrous but set Granny's mind at rest. Oddly enough, it was staged long before American gangsters and celebrated kidnapping cases had made private detectives fashionable on this side of the Atlantic.

Thus, under several pairs of vigilant eyes, I was brought up at home and mostly alone, but for my six cousins, who spent the autumn with us at Maneshti and whom I also quite often saw in town. In the winter I had many lessons, enjoyed my rare parties and regular dancing lessons at the Palace of Cotrocheni with the royal children, but, on the whole, my ideas and tastes seem to have developed on very adult lines. So alive was I to the conversations at the luncheon table, where I was admitted at the tender age of five, that I became bored by the infrequent company of those my own age.

After the frustrated attempt of my father's mistress to break into the ball, dances at our house were practically given up. But Granny carried on with her formal dinner parties, held about once a fortnight for eighteen or twenty people, which also required many exciting preparations.

First the lists of possible dinner guests were overhauled. Then the grouping of individuals began, with each dinner planned around one guest of honor such as a cabinet minister or a foreign diplomat.

After that came the choice of the second in rank, the so-called "left of the host." Then, on a descending scale, all the other guests, down to the very lowest places usually occupied by members of the family or young bachelor friends. The two first invitations were sent three weeks ahead, and only when they were accepted did one build up the rest of the battle plan, always keeping in reserve one or two young couples of similar rank or standing in case of an illness or a failure to accept the invitation.

This judicious system has always remained mine and worked smoothly all over Europe, wherever I have had to entertain. It is, in fact, the classical method used in all embassies and at official parties for which young diplomats are trained from the moment of

their entrance into the "career." It wholly justifies the French saying, "*Il n'y a pas de mauvais placements, il n'y a que de mauvaises invitations!*"

Next came the menu drafting, an important task requiring imagination to avoid any dullness, and common sense to use adequately the available foods. Luckily late autumn happened to be an ideal season for choice and variety of supplies, many native, the rarer ones to be imported from Paris. This was a rather extravagant process, quite in accordance with my family's habits. The household might be neglected for the rest of the week: the dinner parties had to be startling.

The meal commenced with a choice of two soups: one clear, one thick. No difficulty with the first, consommé or turtle was the answer. But the creamy one was an art. Its consistency had to be liquid velvet, its flavor and tonality different from that of any other dish served at some later stage. You could not, with decency, offer *bisque d'écrevisses* if lobster was due on the list, nor *crème à la reine* when chicken was an item on the menu. So your troubles started with the soup and meandered through a meal of about ten courses to end, in triumph or wreckage, on the high rock of a monumental ice-cream pyramid, designed to dazzle the guests.

(I believe I could deliver a documented series of useless lectures on the subtle, dying art of combining food lists, mixing and preparing the most unexpected ingredients to invent new recipes, then carefully assorting wines, according to their flavor, vintage and mark, to match the taste and consistency of well-cooked and properly combined dishes. My early training was only the start to a whole life of gastronomic experiences and achievements with a husband whose chief pleasure and constant preoccupation was his food. He was both greedy and a gourmet—sophisticated in the matter of good wine, yet from choice heavy on the whiskey. Thirty years of life with Jean Callimachi would have made anyone more than food conscious!)

The dresses, jewelry, and incredible headgears of the ladies were

an unending joy and astonishment to me. How could one undergo the torture of having one's hair made to stand stiffly upright in enormous coils and rolls, profusely interwoven with whole bunches of false curls and braids? Crowning or intermingled with this confusion of locks were tulle bows, jeweled combs or hairpins, twisted ribbons, occasionally tiaras, and even flights of minute, stuffed birds. Hiding behind a screen during the dinner, I crouched silent, gaping, and horrified, and decided never to follow such disastrous examples. Very long hair, "a woman's pride" it was termed in my youth, always struck me as a cumbersome ornament.

Grandmamma used simple hairdressing, hardly made up, and usually wore plain, well-cut dresses made of perfect materials, but her guests thought differently. The rugged, haystack appearance of their heads was matched by the extraordinary complication of their clothes. Heavy stiff brocades were covered with garlands and trimmings, fashioned velvets overhung with lace scarves, ruffled and multicolored chiffons studded with pearl embroideries were worn with cute sequined coats of mail. The aging, painted faces above these gowns seemed hideous to me; low open bodices, showing sagging necks and tired skins, gave me a positive fright. Females of all classes always have, and always will, make up very heavily in my country; even peasant girls use a poor quality rouge, sold on tiny sheets of paper in fairs or by wandering vendors, which is obviously very bad for their complexions. Women in the nineties did certainly not wear as well as nowadays. Moreover, the fairly important ladies partaking of these dinners were generally past their prime. The good looks of the younger ones really enchanted me.

In 1899, my last unmarried aunt got engaged, and I vividly remember our trip to Paris to choose and order the trousseau, jewelry, and furs: a classical approach to marriage, which I also went through on my own account and later for my daughter. Some of the fashionable shops still survive; others are vanished into oblivion. Worth, Doucet, Redfern, Creed, each of these well-known houses, three of

them of English origin, had a distinctive style and picturesque anecdotes attached to their founders. Texier-Dechamps, of outmoded Empire fame, was selected to set the tiara, brooch, and bracelets. Grunwaldt had the vogue for furs, and Madame Levy-Nathan, an old friend of the family, was entrusted both with dainty underwear and gorgeous household linen. Hellstern was already the leading shoemaker, but I fear I am a little vague as to the time's smart milliner—Lewis, I believe. Clothes have always fascinated me, which may be the reason these names still stick in my mind.

Certainly wearing my best white silk dress was about the only compensation for having to appear before Granny's friends at her fashionable weekly at-homes. I was very shy and remained so through a socially crowded life, camouflaging my timidity under a sort of talkative arrogance; but, as a child, frightened by all these feminine, scrutinizing eyes, I reverted to dignified silence. I imagine my dislike for hen parties originated in those five o'clock gatherings of Granny's.

Only one of her friends do I remember with gratitude; she knew so well how to put me at my ease. She was tall, very erect, outrageously painted, and beautifully dressed in dark tones, with some flowers or vivid trimming on her hat to relieve the severity of her attire. Complicated veils and draperies subtly concealed part of her features and probably tired neck. Madame Simka Lahovary had never been a beauty, but, better than that, she was a wit, and one of the most successful of Bucharest's socialites. She was credited with many lovers, so numerous, in fact, that a rival once nastily remarked, "She is like the measles, everybody has had her." But she carried her affairs and subsequent criticism with such elegance that no one would have dared to be rude to her face, and I found her marvelous and so kind. Her daughter Simky, equally amusing, but more sedate, was for years Queen Marie's lady in waiting and companion.

Of my distant childhood in far away Roumania I imagined I had forgotten almost all—yet, as I write, I realize how truly yesterday

was mine, how much I belong to a vanishing past, and am startled at how clear the visions of bygone days remain. I now see that the winters in Bucharest with their emphasis on life in a formal society, contrasting with my personal varying fortunes, left a mark on one part of my character. Another influence, that was to develop more slowly but to prove even deeper and more enduring, came from our country home where we would move at the close of the Bucharest season.

Maneshti

*I*N complete contrast with our livelier town life ran our peaceful days in the country, which as a girl I disliked. Must I sadly conclude that I had an unsatisfactory childhood? Was it only much later, in the light of a new happiness, that I came to appreciate the charm of places and things linked with my younger days? It was really after Granny turned the estate over to my husband, and I felt free to rule and run it as my own, that I developed for our country house at Maneshti the deep attachment I will in future preserve for its memory.

Maneshti lay at the edge of the Wallachian plain, almost at the foothills of the Carpathians and well in the oil-field region which extended farther on to higher slopes. Ploeshti and Câmpina, our two nearest towns, were just beginning to become busy centers for the extraction and refining of the newly prospected oil wells.

The estate had been in my paternal grandmother's family since the sixteenth century, but nothing of this period showed in the exterior of the house. A long, narrow, oddly built mansion it was indeed, with its enormous rooms and halls, wasted space, passages, numerous staircases, and useless recesses, rambling lofts and deep cellars.

Redesigned and refaced in mid-Victorian times, my grandparents retaining only the original thick, almost fortresslike walls that warded

off the heavy summer heat, my childhood's home had a definite flavor of its own. Architecturally it belonged to no precise style, but had a strong Oriental touch in its light woodwork painted chocolate brown, its funny little octagonal tower—(ill-proportioned and topped by an unexpected rounded slate cap—that emerged in the center of the building, and its large covered balcony fifteen feet square, called *pridvor* in Roumanian, adjoining the first floor. Here, in this open-air room, we used to have coffee after late dinner, to talk or play games almost all through the hot, starlit summer nights.

The front and general design were inspired by Crimean architecture which had strongly impressed my grandfather when on a mission to the Tzar of Russia, Alexander II, in Yalta. In fact, my grandparents, who had married in 1862, at a time when Napoleon III and Eugénie's frivolous Paris was in full swing, Second Empire fashions were aped abroad, and French commercial exports at their peak, were responsible for the introduction of this Oriental style in the decoration and furnishing of their country house. Later when the place came into my possession, I endeavored to maintain almost intact these period surroundings by removing or replacing all bits of furniture and objects not fitting exactly into this faultless ensemble.

Such was the large drawing room, fifty-two feet long and rather narrow, where everything, from the puce wallpaper to the little plush frames containing old photographs and standing on elaborately painted occasional tables, was in perfect keeping. Heavy brocaded red-and-yellow flowered curtains lavishly draped over net and lace hangings; ebony settees and armchairs upholstered to match; a black desk studded with Sèvres porcelain medallions; a quaint vis-à-vis seat covered in tassels, braidings, and beige velvet piping; chests and consoles inlaid in mother-of-pearl and gilded metal; elaborate crystal chandeliers; ornate Chinese vases bronze-mounted into oil lamps; albums bound in tooled leather and ormolu, ornamented ashtrays, embroidered silk doilies, dainty feather dusters used by

my great-grandmother to clean her Meissen statuettes; with an enormous white porcelain stove towering over the whole room—nothing had been altered, and even an old, hoarse piano survived in a dark corner to remind me of my painful, childish musical exercises.

The dining room, opening on the marble-tiled entrance hall beneath one of the twin, straight oak staircases leading to the large reception hall on the main floor, was a damp, solemn room, in fact, the only gloomy one in the whole building. Everything here contrived to give one claustrophobia. The low wooden ceiling was thickly beamed; the yellowish light, filtering through stained-glass windows, emphasized the darkness of the elbow-height paneling and of the brown embossed Spanish Cordovan leather covering the upper half of the walls, and hardly lit the rich wine-colored Turkish rug, patterned in blue and dull yellow, spread over the entire floor. The furniture, of oak and leather, was solid and old, and the antiquated burnished-copper hanging oil lamp shed too sparing a flicker of light to enliven the surrounding darkness.

The state bedroom, hung in deep crimson satin, contained a heavily curtained four-poster so large that all other furniture had been built in or sunk into the walls. The only exceptions were some unavoidable chairs and an important prayer stool, its backboard hung with numerous ikons painted on wooden panels covered with silver gilt-embossed mounts in Russian eighteenth-century fashion. The frescoed ceiling was covered with fat symbolic ladies and frolicking cupids. As it stood, this room was an eyesore, but I did not dare touch or change Granny's own sanctuary. I occupied it to the end, as my husband refused to use it, preferring to have a modern one designed for himself, and no guest cared to sleep in this overhaunted part of the house.

Several paneled rooms, like my grandfather's study, bore painful touches of imitation *altdeutsch* Gothic as used in Nuremberg and the Rhineland in medieval days and much revived in Central Europe during the late eighties. One must have seen them to understand

the weird attraction of such horrors blended into inexplicable charm. The whole house held an unmistakable atmosphere of mystery and drama, yet to my knowledge, nothing was on record of the passions or crimes supposed to have been perpetrated within its walls. One discovery, however, may have justified such legends.

When investigating the building's foundations in order to bring more light and air into the house by piercing some of the several-feet-thick walls, workmen hit on shallow mortar and in digging through found sunken pits, deep mysterious dungeons full of skeletons severed from their nearby skulls, long iron chains attached to clumsy rings fixed in the masonry, rusty hatchets and old weapons of polished silex—but no clue as to who these martyred prisoners might have been.

Awed and terrified, my deeply religious and slightly superstitious grandmamma had immediately ordered all those bones removed and buried, with pomp, in the village graveyard, without allowing any sacrilegious scientific investigation to take place. Every year, on the anniversary of the sinister discovery, special, very beautiful prayers of exorcism were sung near the spot by our village priest, above a large bowl of clear water, which, after consecration, was sprinkled all over the house to dispel the evil will of the souls now sent to rest.

That our house was haunted no one ever doubted. When passing our gates at night, the villagers devoutly crossed themselves and quickly went their way. Native servants refused to sleep in; several of our guests had seen and heard weird things, they talked of wandering lights, misty female figures, or of having felt their feet suddenly nailed to the floor. Everyone was aware of alien presences. I alone was refused the thrill of seeing any apparition, despite my endeavors, hopes, and useless, long night vigils. Whatever my girlish reactions may have been, Maneshti, where we spent at least five months a year, played a great part in my mental development, and its image is forever present in my memory.

In my youth our existence at Maneshti was both patriarchal and

quiet, much too quiet for my tastes and vivid imagination. Today the Turgenev style of our smoothly flowing life, large household, and well-established routine strikes me as something remote, characteristic of a bygone period of oil lamps, horsedrawn coaches, a slow tempo when culture was personal and polished, when long hours were devoted to reading, letter writing or music, not to mention the gentle art of water colors, to which at least one member of every family was addicted. Leisure was the keynote of the time, so well reflected in the lengthy epistles exchanged with distant friends or even neighbors, since no telephone intruded into secluded peaceful privacies.

I have remained partial to letter writing, a habit surely contracted in Maneshti. There innumerable old letters, of all quality and calibre, were carefully preserved in the deep drawers of my grandfather's study to which I had access because it held all the reference books I pretended to need for my school work. Ancient documents and letters have always attracted me. Of all my lost home's minor treasures these letters are perhaps those I most regret. My own letters too had all come back to me because my Granny, my son, and husband, to whom they were addressed, never destroyed a scrap of paper. An odd sensation, rereading one's own letters, like a mirror reflecting past faces.

Conversation led in an elaborate manner, was also one of the period's features. The more serious topics were usually broached at dinner, in our dark dining room, and were carried on in the big hall before the grownups sat down at the previously laid-out card tables for a game of whist. Meantime, the children were sent to bed, not however without having heard the most alarmingly intellectual arguments arising on highly learned subjects, leading to violent ideological disputes or extraordinary historical statements. In this last instance the matter was usually settled by calling to the rescue all available dictionaries, of which our library shelves harbored a mighty collection ranging from the famous eighteenth-century French

Encyclopédie of Diderot and d'Alembert to the most recent *Larousse*. Many others, including the *Oxford Dictionary*, German lexicons, and historical reference books, even dictionaries of Latin quotations and Greek manuals, would find their way to the sitting room to be feverishly handled and consulted.

For geographical contests, or thorny problems like locating battle areas during the Russo-Japanese War we reverted to one of my uncle's invaluable old maps and modern atlases he rarely failed to bring with him when visiting us because he found our library poorly stocked on this, his favorite hobby.

Poetry and more often literature were equally discussed; politics was almost eliminated as being apt to cause outbreaks of screaming abuse and insult of which Granny disapproved. The row occasioned by one particular argument on the then burning *affaire Dreyfus* was hair-raising, as Papa, green with rage, almost came to blows with Uncle Michael Ghika, a passionate anti-*Dreyfusard*, who went so purple in the face that everyone feared a fit and intervened to part the antagonists. Such pedantic surroundings may have been valuable training for young people, but at times seemed a little strenuous.

Napoleon's slogan: *L'imprévu: c'est ce qui arrive*, bore no truth with us. All our moves and actions were so well planned and drawn out in advance that the slightest deviation created a rift in the even texture of our days. Like the beat of my oars striking the sleepy waters of our small lake, any minor event started a quivering ripple, widening its circles to the farthest banks, then slowly dying out. For weeks we children would comment on some funny gesture of our governesses or the thrilling assurance that one of the servants had seen the ghost. . . .

Programs varied according to the season, but remained immutable for each given time of the year, hardly altering the quiet pattern of our lives, heavily curtained from the outside world. Thrills and dramas occurred only in town; in the country my youthful days fled in a narrow family circle, in which deaths were rare, marriages never

yet seemed to happen. The large trees in the walled park sheltered and shadowed our carefree existence.

This does not precisely mean that we never crossed the garden gates, but long walks on dusty highroads or through plowed fields held little attraction, picnics were most unusual, and drives practically limited to the fourteen-mile stretch leading to the nearest railway station. My morning rides, my love for the harvest and vineyards, and even for the half-dried-out streams bordering the forest on the confines of the estate, acquainted me better than the other members of our household with the surrounding countryside. Flat were our fields, with some occasional scattered trees among grazing meadows, not green and glossy but browned by a burning sun, scantily feeding some lean cattle, or the undergrown little horses our peasants bred and ill-treated. Roumanian horizons are mostly unlimited and flat, and the only redeeming feature in the landscape around Maneshti were the hills rising toward the fairly distant yet clearly visible blue chain of the Carpathians cutting their sharp outline against the cloudless sky.

Closely copied on the scenery's monotony was the daily timetable. Early rising was the rule on hot summer mornings. A ride with my father in the fresh bracing air was my usual routine. Later my stepmother joined us, an intrusion I strongly resented as spoiling my fun. Papa had set me on a horse at the age of six, my tiny legs hardly managing to reach the stirrups. His teaching was splendid. I had been carefully put through my paces, and whether astride or in side-saddle—which I preferred as more classical and elegant—I felt happy on horseback and loved riding over the fields in an unconventional costume impossible in town: long split skirt, open shirt, a small cap on my flowing hair.

In Roumania breakfast is not considered a regular meal and is never taken in the dining room. At Maneshti it was served on trays in the bedrooms and consisted of white coffee (very rarely tea) and *cosonac* (a pastry similar to the French brioche) or rolls, butter, and

jam, without any cooked food. I had mine brought to my room when returning from my ride, but our servants' or the lower class's breakfast is just a snack, eaten anywhere, on a table corner, or even standing.

After a quick shower, and scantily clothed, I hopped into our midget boat for an hour's rowing in the growing heat on the romantic artificial lake at the back of the house. Its meandering borders were lined with irises, bull rushes, and weeping willows letting suddenly appear, between their branches, some plaster statue or the sham eighteenth-century columned temple sheltering a dilapidated copy of a Greek Diana of which my grandfather was very proud.

Shortly after ten o'clock my lessons began and went on until I hurriedly rushed to tidy up for our rather late lunch, after which the whole household collapsed into the habitual long siesta.

I sometimes saw my cousins in the morning, but our programs usually differed, so that the first real meeting of the whole family was at lunch. Tea was served on the terrace or in the drawing room; we children had it in the schoolroom. But undoubtedly the principal event of the day was dinner. Women were usually in full dress; some of the men in a sort of glorified blue velvet pyjamas with braiding; Papa used up his old tails.

Food and drink were of utmost importance in the country and a constant topic of conversation. The estate and household were then, and up to the last war, practically self-supporting, almost a necessity in my premotor childhood with the nearest shopping center fourteen miles distant, over roads fairly bad in dry weather, clogged with mud in the rainy autumn weeks, and completely impracticable during the winter. Guests coming for a day were known to stay a week, blocked by winds and snow, also totally lacking a sense of time or contingencies!

We produced our own milk and cream—the rich clotted cream Roumanians added to practically all their dishes—and butter, shaped for the dining table to the semblance of miniature pyramids on whose surface our old country butler cut out with a spoon or sharp knife

funny little patterns and designs, which varied daily according to the moment's inspiration and which I loved to watch him carve. Sheep's and goats' milk were churned into a variety of herb-flavored cheeses. Buffalo milk, which was much appreciated at home, I detested because of its strong odor.

Naturally, eggs, chicken, and all other fowl came from our farmyard. Special care was taken to breed and fatten turkeys, a delicate bird to rear, and quite a feature in Roumania where we ate them in all seasons but made an effort to produce noteworthy specimens for Christmas export, when, dark-feathered and red-crested, they were shipped in tens of thousands to England.

Our national Christmas food is pork, and great ceremonial is brought to the killing, curing, smoking, or otherwise preparing the fat Christmas pig. The variety of smoked, raw, and cooked hams, sausages of seven or eight different types, galantines, jellied pork trotters, cutlets, roasts, and undercuts produced were innumerable and delicious. The wretched animal, to retain a certain consistency of the flesh, has to be bled in an almost ritual manner, then singed, skinned, and finally cut up and divided according to immemorial tradition. Some frosty late December morning the chef retired into the backyard with a whole retinue of skilled assistants and proceeded to this important execution. The desperate squeals of the unfortunate porker invariably informed me that the sacrifice was being perpetrated.

With the occasional slaughter of a calf or an old ox, the meat problem was well-nigh solved. Game, too, was easily obtained in its season. Only a few braces of partridge nested in the woodlands, but quail, woodcock, and hare were abundant. Deer, stag, wild boar, haunt our mountains. So do bears, but one attempt at eating bear's hindquarter was an experience not to be repeated; it was the toughest, highest flesh I ever tasted.

Our kitchen garden produced all the ordinary vegetables, in addition to the more exotic ones Roumanian climate suits well. Eggplant, most palatable when stuffed with hashed meat, rice, and herbs,

stewed in brown stock, and flooded with sour cream; and large fleshy peppers, hot enough to wring tears from your eyes, are staple foods with our peasants. Dark purple aubergine, glazed and shiny like Chinese pottery, was prepared in various Oriental manners; tomatoes grew gigantic; and Indian corn covered enormous fields, in which the children picked the fresh cobs and brought them home to be eaten grilled, boiled, or stewed. Our part of Wallachia has a climate similar to, say, the states of New York, New Jersey, or Connecticut, and our crops and vegetables are therefore much like American ones. The lavish use of onion and garlic, however, resembled more the cooking of the south of France.

Fruit was plentiful, and the large surpluses were converted into different Oriental specialties, in the confection of which a dozen of the kitchen help busied themselves. Juicy strawberries were usually candied whole, but black, red, or white cherries, all manner of currants, raspberries, blackberries, and apricots were turned into jams, sherbets, pastes, *rahat* [Turkish delight], sweet pickles, and very subtle brandies that were manipulated and matured for several years before being consumed as liqueurs. Tons of sugar and armies of jars had to be commandeered for these various purposes.

Melons did well with us, above all the small Spanish variety, so smooth and cool in summer. Watermelons flourish. The peasants bury them deep in the soil, cover them with straw to keep them cool; when extracted, holes are bored at each end and the melon is sucked like a giant egg. Often when riding through the hot countryside we would stop near some isolated hut, ask the owner for a drink of melon and gallop off, grateful and refreshed.

Velvety plums, juicy greengages, apples, pears, quince, were responsive and good. Peaches shriveled in our extreme heat but figs froze in the winter, and of course we had our own sunny vineyard, with the cares and rewards it entailed.

The property naturally grew its own wheat, also Indian corn, and both were ground in our primitive water mill into several grades of

flour, according to the various uses to which they were put: light and fluffy for pastries, coarser for *mamaliga*, different again for our homemade loaves. Rows of small bags, carefully labeled, containing these various qualities of flour were stocked in our famous storeroom.

Large, whitewashed, and airy, this storeroom was my childhood's constant temptation. Up to the high ceiling, shelves reeked with innumerable provisions and delicacies, jealously locked and guarded by Cerberus in person, our old Czech governess, Fraulein Adelschwung von Patzelt, who after having educated my aunts remained on to live and die in our house. She was very tall, thin, with a long sallow face, middle-parted hair rolled into a bun in the nape of her neck, and always wore long, black, clinging, high-collared dresses. She looked like a dark heron, with keen eyes and pointed beak, but this fierce appearance was denied by her incredible kindness. Eternally flustered and agitated, to her death she remained as shy as a child. She had seen us all born, and insisted on keeping up a great pretence of authority which, after some coaxing, always gave in to our whims and caprices, and our Lolo would then benignly allow her treasured storeroom to fall a prey to our looting.

In tightly closed earthen jars were pressed caviar and pickled sturgeon, or herring; onions too, and salted cucumbers; baby pumpkins or marrows in brine; and our special brand of Roumanian sauerkraut that one had to keep well sealed because of its terrible stench. Smoked trout were stored in baskets lined with scented fir branches. Like a dense army of bottles stood the homemade tomato sauces and ketchups so copiously used in our national cooking. In addition to the jams and sweets were all manner of preserved or dried fruit. Mustard came in many varieties, one of them home-brewed. Bags of unground coffee were sent direct by a Turkish firm, while enormous tins of tea and biscuits were imported from England. From France came pounds of *paté de foie gras*, bottled truffles, asparagus, peas, and many fancy cheeses. Homemade cheeses and melted butter were kept in barrels;

hams, salami, and strings of sausages hung from the beams, completing a picture of plenty and a symphony of conflicting smells.

Whether in Poland, Russia, or Roumania, all large country households of the period presented, I suppose, a similar aspect of self-sufficient citadels. And, going a century or so back, the same was surely true of any English or French countryseat. Market problems did not enter the minds of eighteenth-century hostesses. Neither did the large tracts of land they possessed seem to have brought their owners any sense of responsibility toward their tenants and the soil they depended upon for their luxurious mode of life.

In France, court life overruled any other preoccupation. Estates and serfs were just a royal gift meant to maintain their owners in legitimate splendor in the air of Versailles, the only air worth breathing. England was always more country and duty minded, yet most of those delightful Regency letters, reflecting the period's light wit in their faded pages, mention trips and neighborly visits from a purely social viewpoint, unconcerned with nature, country husbandry, or the fate of those who tilled and plowed the soil.

My grandparents ignored agriculture, taking their duties toward the land superficially and knowing comparatively few of their tenants. Bailiffs and keepers looked after the estate. The villagers were loyal enough not to resent this treatment, but proved most responsive when I took over, as I behaved quite differently and held a more serious view of my obligations.

Even as a child, or girl, I managed to know the peasants and their children better than did the rest of my family. Grape picking with the villagers was fun, and so was sliding down from huge haystacks on the thick wire cables connecting them with the threshing machine. I also immensely enjoyed driving slowly home at dusk, sitting on top of a heavily laden cart carrying bright yellow corn cobs to be stored in the barn. All these were unforgettable treats, even if they entailed a little scolding. Old Lolo alone stood by me, saying, "Let the child live, Madame. She genuinely loves country life and it does her

no harm." So Granny gave up polishing me properly, and I had my way.

Some of the other duties I was supposed or compelled to perform I relished much less, and I submitted with great reluctance to my housekeeping training about which Granny was inexorable. Having left school without any practical experience and then been faced almost immediately with a large household to run, she had never been equal to the task. For twenty years the house had been managed by her father-in-law, who shared his son's home, later by her elder daughter, and finally by our dear Lolo. Well knowing the drawbacks of complete ignorance, Granny insisted on my training being thorough and practical. I never objected to supervising our untidy maids, though the place was enormous, and racing all over rooms and corridors took a lot of time. Planning and ordering meals I enjoyed, but cooking and inspecting the actual provisions made me positively sick. The sight of the vast quantities of fish arriving from the Danube estates was enough to upset me, but when pounds and pounds of raw meat had to be weighed and tested it was more than I could stand. The result was disastrous, and I was relieved of these duties. Cooking was just as alarming. Clumsiness, lack of dexterity and timing were my conspicuous failings. Burned cutlets, sloppy omelets, and sticky scrambled eggs displayed my incapacity, and this venture too was finally abandoned.

I later developed an unexpected gift for training and coaching excellent chefs. Literature may have helped, since some cookery books are real masterpieces. Besides, almost everyone is more or less acquainted with the rudiments of international *grande cuisine*; but although our family sampled and adopted all sorts of foreign recipes, the basis remained our national cooking, a complicated blend of Turkish, Greek, Russian, Polish, and purely Roumanian dishes.

I cannot resist mentioning our famous *mezelik*. The word may be Turkish and the habit born in Russia, but it has become second nature to all Roumanians. In the country it received almost greater emphasis

than in town, perhaps because more imagination had to be lavished on this magnified hors d'oeuvre devised out of the storeroom treasures. With small forks and an absent-minded air, one picks a bit here and there from a multitude of well-garnished, little silver plates, each mouthful accompanied by a generous glass of *tzuica* or *mastica*, and by the time regular lunch is served plates may be cleared but minds are becoming slightly foggy. Thus, in a blissful state of vague intoxication, the party proceeds to a long and substantial seated meal. Small wonder that afternoon work in Roumania starts late and is painfully slack. Summer siestas are a widespread habit, only too often kept up when the season offers no more justification for this Oriental custom.

At Maneshti the children usually made their entrance at lunch time straight into the dining room, skipping the *apéritifs*. There, twice daily, we found the house party gathered, twenty in all, so well known to each other that almost every individual reaction could easily be foreseen. Were we a typically Roumanian family? I suppose so, but I cannot be positive. The vivid impressions of youth with their strong impact on my mind and imagination probably prevent me from distinguishing what was purely personal to each of the characters around me from those traits genuinely representative of our country. I was hardly awake to psychological analysis, and also lacked a basis of comparison enabling me to discriminate between ordinary human reactions and those bred by surroundings, heredity, and education.

The feminine element dominated Maneshti in number and apparent influence, but not in actual authority. Men were scarce, yet theirs was the power to hurt or destroy, and, maybe unconsciously, they strongly sensed it. Of the twenty persons thrown together by circumstances, living for several months under the same roof, only four at the time of which I am writing were men. A matriarchal community, in fact if not in spirit, because some of the Oriental submissiveness of women to their menfolk lingered in my country

from top to bottom of the social scale. The male may have been unfaithful, drunk, or cruel, yet he was worshiped as the deity entitled to bring unrest and heartbreak to the family he hardly guided yet predominantly ruled. This subservient attitude, religiously observed by our seniors, oddly enough came true even with my cousins and myself. Without being as obedient wives as our elders, we blended our keen sense of independence with deep attachment to the men we married or loved. None of us, Granny's seven granddaughters, quite succeeded in breaking with the national instinct by shaking off man's rule.

Roumanian women have for long enjoyed a wicked, all too well deserved, reputation of immorality, but equally that of a very special lasting attraction. I imagine a great part of their charm lies not only with their looks but in the clinging quality of their love. This stands true for all my compatriots from the mud hut to the castle. Wonderful lovers, they may put up with an occasional beating, yet still hold their own. Their alternating subservience and domination holds a definite harem flavor.

Granny, her husband's victim despite her masterful personality, belonged to this type. But the strict education she imparted to her three daughters only succeeded in forcing them into a mold of total dullness unredeemed by charm. With perfect manners, excellent education, and French baccalaureate degrees—rare with women of their day—they lacked mental originality, wit, and humor. Good mothers and faithful wives, I can only explain the undercurrent of envy and hypocrisy in their natures by deep repressions due to their mother's domineering disposition.

At table, among the seated family group the dark head and pointed appearance of my youngest aunt, Anna, stood out. The most vocal of the three sisters, she was also the only snob in our midst, eternally afraid of not being in line with fashion's decrees or of missing a social opportunity. It was her luxurious trousseau I earlier described, at the time when she wedded an exceedingly rich, half Russian Prince of

diminutive stature, Léon Cantacuzene, noncommittal and washed out, in complete contrast with his father who had personality for two. A genuine Russian *Kneaz* he was—tall, broad, blond, and bearded—who never traveled without a barrel of water from his own private well, his camp bed and bedding, and the most extravagant 1830 clothes. His conversation was as original as his appearance. But his son had inherited nothing from him save the money—which he squandered in gambling dens or with women, preferably modish French actresses, though any shrewd, pretty girl could make a raid on his checkbook. He was disarmingly proud of his successes, but very boring, particularly when he managed, through sheer weight of influence and wealth, to enter Parliament and started talking politics, about which he knew well-nigh nothing.

Although supposed to be my mother's best friend I knew my aunt Anna did not like me, probably through jealousy, and because she fancied I would have a better chance in life than her two charming daughters who were much better looking than myself. I must have sensed this as a child and much preferred my second aunt, Marie Catargi, silent, gentle, plain, and sweet-tempered. She refused to wear glasses on her clear, limpid eyes, and we children had no pity for the blunders a very short sight made her commit. We were overjoyed on discovering she had once sat down at a *café terrace* opposite a total stranger, whom she mistook for her husband, and asked him, "Darling, what drink will you buy me?" At which the poor fellow fled in terror.

She was our laughingstock but took it smilingly, just as she coped with her dipsomaniac husband, one of the most agreeable and well-educated men I ever met, when sober, but insufferable during his drinking fits. He spoiled us and we loved him dearly, but the climaxes of his mania were terrible, and he then would drink anything, even the Eau de Cologne I once found him gulping from a bottle on my dressing table. He used savage tricks to conceal his liquor, and one day our mechanic detected two large tins of brandy hidden among

gasoline cans. Small wonder the Diesel engine working our water supply refused to function on pure alcohol.

He disappeared for days on mysterious drinking bouts, would be found paralytic in a ditch or return unruffled, carrying some nice present for his scared wife and quoting drunken poets from Catullus to Verlaine to my great admiration. My uncle Paul was to die in a coma after having too copiously celebrated my son's birth, and his widow never quite recovered from the shock. She had married against her parents' wishes, yet in her strange way had been the only one of Granny's children to have a happy conjugal life.

The eldest of them, my aunt H  l  ne Ghika must, in her youth, have been pretty, but her small fine features had now disappeared in flabby fatness and she invariably wore shapeless black dresses of the "maternity" type. Her four daughters, my daily companions, whom she worshiped and mismanaged, had not yet developed their varied personalities, but I cannot omit mentioning their father whose memory remains linked for me with terror and awe.

Ten years before I was born my aunt H  l  ne had married a towering, broad-shouldered, fair-haired young career officer, Prince Michael Ghika, of the Wallachian reigning branch, who, except for looks and birth, brought little to this match. Well-paired, these two made a devoted, ambitious, rather grabbing couple, outwardly kind to all and sundry, with an occasional catty remark revealing their true instincts.

I really have no right to pass judgment on my uncle as I was under eight when he died in some mysterious attack of raving madness which explained the scenes of flaming rage in which he only too often indulged. His normal manners were excellent, but he lacked all self-control and one of his fits of ungoverned temper left a frightening image in my mind.

One lovely summer night, in our garden after dinner, I ventured, aged five or thereabouts, to make some remark my uncle did not fancy. My actual words I can't remember, and in view of my age

were surely of no consequence. Uncle Michael's face went bright scarlet; his moustache stood up like an angry cat's whiskers; and the heavenly stillness of the night was torn by the most hair-raising flood of insult and abuse uttered in the loudest, most stentorian tones I ever heard. Eventually he collapsed in a climax of white fury, but by that time I already lay in my Granny's lap, a little heap of crying wreckage. Granny was outraged, and for a time forbade him her house. Ever after I dreaded and hated the sight of my uncle.

His sole redeeming grace in my eyes was the first telephone in our house, a novelty of which I highly approved, installed by virtue of his position as Director of Post and Telegraph—a job obtained from a kinsman then the Prime Minister. That and the mystery of death were the two new experiences he brought into my life.

The long string of faces around our dinner table was completed by our four governesses. First came Fraulein von Adelschwung, our beloved Lolo. Near her sat my Mademoiselle Charier, the most agreeable monster imaginable, short, stout, and ugly, a brilliant conversationalist, with the French quick intelligence and talent for repartee. Learned, without pedantry, she had the gift of making lessons appealing, and although she was firm I adored her, and Charier smilingly accepted my teasing. Her greed and hatred of physical exercise were my usual targets. She stayed with me until I married, and I believe her appreciation of my husband was due to their sharing a great weakness for good food and fine wines.

Miss Williamson, educating the Cantacuzene babies before they went to school, was young, good-looking, flirtatious, and without much originality. Of this quality the last specimen of our educational team had more than her fair share. With a name like a fanfare, her appearance was a cross between Queen Christina of Sweden and a Macbeth witch, and she was equally unexpected in her conversation and behavior. Fraulein Eisenhuth von Bach termed herself on her visiting cards, "*Pedagogue des Princesses Ghika*," and surely she had the attitude of a tutor rather than that of a retiring female. There was

no book she had not read; no subject she had not studied; no country she had left unvisited; nor any topic of which she was ignorant. She somehow intimated that she had attended universities in Germany, Italy, England, France, and Spain, and that some dark mystery hovered over her birth, whether royal descent or a mistake in her sex no one could tell. Her information about Germanic courts and princelings was inexhaustible. At the dinner table she held her own better than any, for she was fertile in quotations and anecdotes and fluent master of five languages. She vanished out of our midst as mysteriously as she had entered it, and I missed her wit and her intelligent German lessons.

Have I succeeded in conveying the country atmosphere in which I grew up which both sharpened my critical sense and attached me to our soil? I can so clearly visualize all those figures and faces, lean or plump, sincere or hypocritical, young and old, reminding me of a Diego Rivera fresco with portraits bordering on caricature, that I wonder whether my words depict them vividly enough, give them their truthful due.

Maneshti, where I dreamed my first dreams, spent so many days in joy or sorrow, I will see no more. I almost wept when, after the First World War, I returned to my old home to find it battered and scarred by German invasion and occupation. But nearby the weeping willows still let their branches droop, lightly touching the lake's stagnant water. There stood all my dear friends, the trees. The tall, silver pine Grandpa had lovingly planted; the hornbeam alley trimmed in French style; the two huge lime trees supposed to date back to 1810 when Granny's grandparents first planted the garden. The thin, paired poplars guarding the entrance gates; the fine old elms; the peeling plane trees; the secular walnuts still bearing in their bark the nails of our swings and hammocks; the large apple and pear trees in the orchard, so ancient they no more bore fruit but were preserved for the tortured beauty of their shapes; and the acacias, the innumerable, scented acacias, that grow like weeds all over my

country. All my old friends, the trees, were greeting me with the gentle bow of their swaying branches, ready to teach a lesson of steadfastness and eternal renewal in a world which seemed doomed to failure or destruction. Would they still hold the same lesson if I could see them now?

Friends and Characters

*A*LTHOUGH Granny's private desire would have been to keep life at Maneshti within the family circle, we occasionally had visitors. After my father's second marriage, when we girls were growing up, house parties became more frequent and, at times, quite lively.

My grandmother, supremely unaffected though she was, did not believe in entertaining simply. Offering her guests or neighbors when they came to call our usual fare, letting them sample our normal daily routine, did not occur to her. On the contrary she was partial to a certain pomp, and therefore a galaxy of food, drink, and amusements had to be devised for her house parties. Perhaps this explains why she disliked having her country rest disturbed by social intrusions, yet rejected my theory that what was good enough for us would be fit for a king. But Granny would have none of that, and I was instructed to supervise the necessary preparations. I relished the task.

Table decorations had to be elaborate and the hothouses yielded their choicest products. Heavy Bohemian cut glass and crested china were fetched from the lofts, carefully tucked-away lace tablecloths saw again the light of the five hundred candles blazing in our chandeliers. Silver, brasses, and livery buttons underwent careful polishing, and all details in the guest rooms must be attended to personally.

"Make sure, Anne-Marie, that there is a good supply of iced water and nice jam by each bedside at night." This was our national "night-cap" served in special silver or crystal containers.

Our most prominent visitor was Princess Marie, who sometimes stopped for a meal on her way from Sinaia to Bucharest along with one of her two elder children. They had been born at barely a year's interval and were very near my own age. I knew them well from musical parties at the Palace, dancing lessons at Cotrocheni, and the weekly sewing meetings Princess Elisabeth—later George II of Greece's Queen—regularly attended, often making a nuisance of herself. She had become accustomed to the subservient manner of her few playmates which had a pernicious effect on her character, but she easily yielded when she encountered any firm opposition.

Princess Elisabeth was a difficult, haughty child whose education ought to have been handled in a much subtler fashion than it was, for it completely overlooked her supersensitivity, which she hid behind silence or occasional outbursts of arrogance. Her courtesy was otherwise faultless, particularly in comparison with women of less exalted station. Although a devoted friend to those she liked, she never achieved her mother's grace and savoir faire. From childhood her features were perfectly chiseled and beautifully regular but cold, lacking in charm and expression. She spoke little and sparingly, from which many concluded that she lacked brains, a completely mistaken conclusion.

She was very much overshadowed by Carol who, from his earliest days showed intelligence, temperament, and a quick grasp of facts and situations. Even as a boy he was strongly opinionated, self-willed, not easy to guide, and devoid of discrimination in selecting his friends; yet he already possessed undeniable attraction and could be very winning when he chose. His childish spitefulness, I fear, he never lost. Actually he retained all his youthful qualities and faults, perhaps exaggerated, as a man. I believe he was completely sincere in his most objectionable political actions. Much as I criticized the politics of his reign, I cannot find it in me to blame his emotional and private life. I rather understood him, but then I am no puritan.

Queen Marie, whose gifts I so much admired, failed in one im-

portant quality—the ability to educate her children properly. No real discipline was ever imposed on them, and she was bitterly repaid by her first born for her leniency. Carol could be insufferably rough, and when encouraged by Elisabeth or Nicholas, lost all sense of proportion. I well remember my fury when, in a fit of high spirits they overturned my little skiff with me in it, drenching me from head to foot. I totally forgot their position, or mine as hostess, and called them hideous names. Princess Elisabeth was also pretty wet and had to change into some of my clothes. I don't recollect what happened to Carol, but I bitterly noticed they were not rebuked at all whilst I was most strictly—and I thought unjustly—scolded.

Their father, Prince Ferdinand, came only once to Maneshti. This was quite an event though his visit left no particular impression with me. I was to know him much better as King despite his embarrassing shyness, which did not help mine. Sitting by him at meals could be a painful ordeal, but once one had taken the initiative of breaking the ice, he became quite affable and friendly. His shooting parties with my husband proved an invaluable conversational opening I only too often used. His wife's spectacular achievements and beauty may have accounted for some of his timidity.

It was around the time I am now recording that Princess Marie's appearance most enchanted me. In 1905, I believe, some charitable institution was officially opened in Ploeshti, my grandfather's constituency, by the Crown Princess. We all went to meet her. Framed in the doorway of the royal coach, her luminous beauty lighting up the dullness of our drab railway station, she remains an unforgettable vision. Her magnificent blue eyes sparkled; her vivid complexion glowed, softened by the large black-feathered picture hat she wore on her bright fair hair; her long dark dress was simple, but over her shoulders was thrown a long scarlet cape, enhancing her tall, slim figure. She was simply breath-taking.

To radiant beauty she added intelligence, wit, passion, and a deep understanding and love for her adopted country, where she had lived

since her marriage at the age of sixteen. It was her devotion to—and political comprehension of—Roumania's aspirations and interests which made her judge situations clearly, and wisely advise her husband, who listened to her suggestions, especially during the crisis of 1916 when we entered the First World War beside the Allies. Her sense of duty to the realm was highly developed, and during the German invasion, when Roumanian troops and the Government retired to Jassy, she displayed unbounded energy and courage, efficiently organizing hospitals and canteens in the face of sordid poverty, lack of materials, and housing space. She never relaxed her political activity, and the importance of the part she played in Roumania—and in Balkan history—may be even better appreciated in the retrospect of passing years.

Queen Marie was immensely popular at home. The people simply worshiped her; society admired her and knew her well; for she loved parties and functions, entertained perfectly herself, and accepted numerous private invitations. Her engagements and the duties she fulfilled were innumerable, all smilingly performed.

Her love affairs and caprices were never considered a grievance by the people. On the contrary, I believe the Roumanians, with their natural lack of morality, felt relieved at not having a saint for their Queen. She really ruled during her husband's too short reign and, with the exception of minor mistakes, her home politics were good and her international views sound. She kept Bucharest's social standards brilliantly alive, and she was deeply regretted when her son brutally pushed her aside, with no heed for her experienced advice.

In addition to royalty, one of our constant visitors was Princess Marthe Bibesco, who later achieved international fame. I knew her even before her early marriage to one of my relations, George Bibesco, a keen motorist and airman, who held one of the first pilot licenses issued in France. He was genial and charming, with looks but no brains, and I always dearly loved him, whatever my varying relations with his wife may have been. At this early stage Marthe was not yet

an author of repute, not even the lovely ornament of cosmopolitan salons; just a beautiful young woman under twenty, lively and gay, still undergoing the severe training to which her stern mother-in-law had subjected her practically from the day of her wedding. She must have been about sixteen when she was married, a mere girl, strikingly handsome, with a scheming nature, faulty ankles, great intelligence, steady will power, and an incomplete education. Of all these items only the last could be perfected, and domineering Princess Valentine Bibesco promptly saw to that.

It is a pity to reduce Aunt Valentine's adventurous life to a few paragraphs, for it could fill a volume. Born Countess de Caraman-Chimay of illustrious French and Belgian lineage, with some of Madame Tallien's hot blood in her veins, she had married the Prince de Beauffremont, a general in the French Imperial Army, one of the leaders of the celebrated ill-fated cavalry charge at the Battle of Sedan in 1870. Two daughters born in wedlock and her matrimonial duties had not prevented her from falling in love and eloping with a dashing Roumanian officer serving in the armies of France, where his father, Prince George Bibesco of Wallachia, was ending his days in exile. The young officer, called George too, was a cousin and a great friend of my grandfather. The affair went all right until juridical complications occurred. No divorce law existed in France at the time, and Prince de Beauffremont not only threatened, but actually brought up a case for the arrest of his unfaithful wife. The scandal had reached its peak; society cut Aunt Valentine dead; her kin never saw her again. She fled to Germany, thus avoiding the issue of the court's judgment; twice changed nationality and religion; and finally emerged from the turmoil, duly married to her former lover, and blessed with three more children. (This divorce case became a classic in the annals of international jurisdiction, and my husband, when graduating as Doctor of Law, chose the famous Beauffremont versus Bibesco divorce suit as subject for his thesis, perhaps because he had been to school with young George, third of the name.)

Sedate and aging, now firmly anchored in the safe moorings of the Greek Orthodox faith and the ancient family palace by the dingy river running through Bucharest's formerly fashionable district, the Dowager Princess had kept her great distinction of manner, bitter wit, and sharply expressed opinions which she aired with gusto. A pillar of the Church, she regularly, and in state, attended Mass and services. She turned even religion into ostentation, for instead of using a pew at services, she had a whole aisle of the large family chapel gated off and reserved for her private use and that of her relatives. Deeming herself well established in the respectability of old age, she indulged in no kind or lenient word for the younger women following in the blurred footsteps of her reckless youth, which she appeared to have completely forgotten. She was both dreaded and appreciated for her merciless remarks and brilliant conversation.

Widowed at the very time of her son's marriage to Marthe Lahovary, she had retired to an isolated country house, Posada, in the Carpathians, confining to this severe solitude the lovely young daughter-in-law she had just acquired who, she decided, was clumsily handled by her inexperienced husband and in great need of coaching. So Marthe was put to harder work than at any finishing school, made to read all classical and modern authors, take notes and write digests, quote prose and recite verse. Also she was taught to walk and move gracefully around the echoing rooms of the gloomy, unfriendly house.

Obediently the young woman seemed to accept this harsh rule for nearly five long years during which her only child, a daughter, was born. Then, suddenly, she surged from her seclusion, fully developed and polished, in perfect possession of her gifts, sure of her growing powers. She spread her shining wings in a single splash of revolt and flew away to the conquest of fame in all the capitals of Europe. She had just turned twenty, and that same year her elder sister, after a notorious divorce, married my father. This brought Marthe closer to our circle, and her two younger sisters became more my com-

panions. The Lahovarys, a family of Greek descent and modest origin, showed in almost all its members great capabilities, talent, and even statesmanship. Among them were a prime minister, who was also a renowned orator, politicians, cabinet ministers, generals, and writers. A gifted race, and Marthe stood worthy of their blood.

Marthe's escape was due to a sort of belated honeymoon when her husband was sent by car on a romantic mission to Persia. The Syrian Bled, Ispahan, Teheran, Baghdad, places and people were so strange that they sounded, when named by Marthe, like fairy stories come alive. So they appeared in the tangible result of her trip, her first book *Les Huit Paradis*, written in a style illuminated like an Eastern miniature, scented as by Firdausi's rose, so accomplished that envious voices whispered the work had been revised and trimmed by Robert de Montesquiou, then at the height of his literary and social notoriety. Princess Bibesco has since proved she could write brilliantly without help, but this book brought her immediate, dazzling success in Paris, where it was published.

French salons of quality, so obstinately closed to her mother-in-law, instantaneously opened wide their doors to this girl, so young, so ravishing, and so gifted. It is hard nowadays to conceive her lightning triumph, which I am not exaggerating. Paris was literally stormed in one single season by Marthe Bibesco. Woman and author achieved an equally staggering success. Her looks, her wit, her impeccable French, her enormous emeralds exotically set, her talent, her skillful quotations, the retinue of beaux surrounding her—she was the marvel of the city. But there was no modesty in her triumph. She took no pains with dowagers, wives, or possible enemies. Yet all hostesses invited her, for she infallibly attracted all worth-while men. Envy and criticism were still impotent, but carefully watching for her first slip. She was not very long in offering scope to wicked gossip, for her fairy godmother had bestowed upon her all priceless gifts except one: she had but little tact and rarely avoided pitfalls. Slowly, despite her beauty, talent, and literary reputation growing with each book, she

embarked on a chain of social and political mistakes. Too many jealous or offended women stood on watch to let the slightest blunder pass unnoticed; and their long list was, I fear, headed by that poetical genius and most capricious of creatures, Anna de Noailles, not only a literary rival but a cousin sharing the family prejudices. Anna was also a startlingly glamorous female, who kept her audience under the spell of her verbal fireworks which she refused to have dampened by Marthe's glamour.

I was not yet out and only write from hearsay, but I well remember the bittersweet description given to me by a girl friend, eyewitness of Marthe's theatrical entrance at an embassy ball—Prince Radolin's, the German Envoy to France. Dressed by Paul Poiret, she was swathed in brocades and jewels, her beautiful auburn hair crowned with the family emeralds matched by her feather fan, which she carried like a banner. For a short instant she paused on the threshold, while her name was heralded by a powdered flunkey, confident of the impression she would make. Conversations broke off; women turned pale; and, before they recovered, a swarm of men, young and old, famous or handsome, surrounded the entering deity. For these performances her timing was supreme, under other circumstances it sometimes proved less perfect.

She was acquainted with anyone celebrated or worth knowing in Europe; and she has retained, scattered in all walks of life, devoted followers who will never fail her. I never understood how so clever a woman could make the blatant error of doubting the outcome of the First World War. Had she only avoided political intrigue, which suited her badly, her remarkable literary talent and beauty might have won for her all the triumphs she desired.

But I am roving far from Maneshti and our guests. I can see Sir Colville Barclay, the charming young British Secretary, or gay Baron Nicky Taube, whose stepfather, sly Baron de Giers, the Russian Ambassador, made me aware of the Moscovite diplomatic technique of

trying to obtain information by direct approach in a shower of abrupt, disconcerting questions.

Among all these dimmed figures, or other vague young men deemed eligible for my older cousins, one character stands out sharply, our most welcome and original friend, Léon Ghyka. Like that of many Moldavians originating from the northern Slav borders, his mental make-up was, to put it mildly, most eccentric. A threat of madness hung over his family. He actually held his great wealth and enormous estate of Dumbraveni, a good sixty thousand acres in extent, from an insane uncle, who for long years lingered on, adequately cared for and guarded in an isolated pavilion in the grounds. Evil forebodings haunted Léon's nights to the extent of never, for fear of losing his mind in hours of darkness, going to bed before dawn, when the return of daylight brought calm to his highly strung system.

Eminently sociable, his one endeavor was to keep agreeable company until the first sunrays brightened the sky. His whole life, as a consequence, was planned on those lines. He traveled, preferably by night, with an elaborate outfit of dark curtains in order to establish a total black-out in any country house or hotel he visited, thus recuperating from his nightly vigil by sound, undisturbed daytime sleep. His violent temper often carried him to extremes; outbreaks of rage marked his arrival in peaceful provincial inns on not finding a whole staff at his orders at the unearthly hours he usually kept. He started terrific scenes with frightened cab drivers who refused to take him out in the pitch dark over uneven country tracks, which were about all Roumania could boast of as roads in those days. The row usually ended in his giving the coachman a wild thrashing, then rewarding him with a princely tip of ten times the normal fare. He was heartily cursed, but willingly driven. Oddly enough, these rather savage methods seemed to work, for he was universally popular and appreciated, although considered to be sympathetically crazy. Exceptionally

kindhearted, helpful in a discreet way, his conversation was genial, unexpected, full of information, new ideas and views on people and facts, all spoken on a decisive tone and with a skillful choice of words. His gaiety was refreshing. Apart from his outbreaks of rage, he had beautifully old-fashioned, yet perfectly simple, manners.

His night-sleep phobia was a welcome treat to the younger generation, as we were in turns allowed to keep him company during his long talkative vigils, and few people's conversation have I more enjoyed. Late afternoons he reappeared to share our games with the gusto of a boy of eighteen, despite his nearing fifties, his short legs, fat belly, and unruly mop of graying hair. Any unexpected form of sport or outdoor entertainment was enthusiastically accepted by Léon, and eventually even improved upon.

Everything ran smoothly providing his day sleep was duly respected. The minute it was disturbed, havoc ensued. He once decided to have all cockerels in the vicinity of his country house slaughtered because their gay crowing interfered with his first morning sleep. Orders were orders; all cocks were sacrificed but one. Escaping into a high lime tree, the survivor hailed the dawn with his piercing cry. In floating nightgown, his eyes flaming, a Russian nagaika whip gripped in his fist, Léon rushed out ready to beat or kill anyone present. The servants fled in terror. The cheeky bird still crowed loudly. Suddenly a matronly housemaid stepped forward, facing her master's rage.

"I am sorry, Your Highness, but we can't kill that cock, it would be sacrilege—because we have called him *Léonash* [Little Leo] after you."

A wild roar of laughter, and Léon retired in a fit of giggles.

His household and retinue partook of the bohemian and the regal, and his friends had nicknamed him *Léon le Magnifique*. Of the orgiastic saturnalia said to take place in his home, I knew little as a child. Later my husband and father gave me full accounts of these Roman feasts, which were supervised by his sleek, slyly smiling French butler,

Senator by name, and Menduli, a diminutive Negro, dressed up in the style of La Du Barry's page. No society woman ever attended these banquets, albeit for years they were the springboard of the capital's hetaera and best known courtesans. Besides those ladies of slight virtue, a whole court of artists, poets, musicians lived on Léon Ghyka's munificence and sense of splendor. Léon was always in love, but usually not long with the same person, and the story of his amorous exploits was as varied and unexpected as the rest of his behavior and conception of life.

Only once did a lasting flame burn in his changing heart, and he almost went genuinely mad when the object of his passion refused to answer his suit and become his wife. This time it was a sedate, very lovely society girl he was wooing, but in such a loud spectacular manner that the wretched creature took fright, and firmly refused to tie her life to so abnormal a suitor. For years he gave her no peace; watched her every step; pursued her day and night; serenaded her, escorted by a band of singing gypsies; lavished on her gifts, invariably returned; showered flowers upon her passing carriage, which he followed in his own victoria driven at top speed by a Russian coachman guiding a pair of wild Orloff stallions; launched in her honor huge parties she never attended—in a word behaved in a fashion fit to scare any daring woman, let alone a very shy young girl. At last he gave up, but never quite recovered from that deep disillusion.

Oddest of all was his Dumbraveni house. Not that it was odd in architecture or appearance—of its sort Moldavia held a score—with haunted bedrooms, 1840 furniture, and conventional receptions, but its soul and habits were similar to no other. The whole house queerly centered around a huge, uncanny bathroom, used for every imaginable purpose, besides the one for which it was obviously intended. Léon Ghyka and his friends practically lived in this bathing hall, for which a novel and rare electric plant had been imported in an era still habitually candlelit, and which he had fitted out with every sort of

shower, swimming tank, electric or X-Ray baths, and a most unexpected contraption difficult to describe in—let us say—the King's English! Apart from chairs and sofas, the fittings also included a frigidaire and a most modern electric cooker. This came in useful when, after endless talk, at four or five o'clock in the morning, Léon felt hungry and, turning to those of his guests who still survived, emphatically decided, "Now let us have a bite of food." Tidbits were fetched from the larder and cooking began, the host officiating, the others lending a weary hand. Many a time some exhausted female guest, long retired to her room, would be roused at daybreak to sample one of the best omelets or most perfect beefsteaks she ever tasted. Then in the clear summer dawn one went off to the fields to see the sun rise in glory over the vast horizons of Moldavia's rippling hills. Only after this ultimate ceremony was one allowed to go to bed.

With age, alas, Léon grew more and more normal and did the obvious things, like marrying his housekeeper's daughter (who had already borne him two sons) keeping banal hours, and even sleeping at night. His money and land going, some of his illusions crumbling, his court diminishing, he settled in the nearby town of Botoshani; and Dumbraveni, rarely inhabited, fell into sad decay. One single carriage, with two ill-paired, skinny horses, their harness mended with old strings, were but the ghosts of vanished splendors. Guests or relatives still came, taking their chance, then left in melancholy awe. A single servant—cook, valet, maid, and chauffeur all in one—alone attended the house and did it well, except for an occasional two or three days a month when, dead drunk and useless, he disappeared into some unknown hiding place. Life stopped. Nobody ate, or washed, until sobered, fresh and unconcerned, Jon reappeared to fulfill his daily tasks.

Legend was breaking up, for, like many aristocratic landowners, our friend had been practically ruined by the agricultural reform and expropriation of 1919-1921, which, in a country devoid of industry, had destroyed traditional wealth. Few were those who had

the energy and strength to turn a new leaf and start afresh in new directions. Léon Ghyka was both too Utopian and too discouraged even to try. He still retained his wit and intelligence, but his spirit was broken, more perhaps by the loss of his illusions than by that of his land. Russia had been his lifelong admiration and ideal; the Russia of Imperial grandeur, boyar life, and the rule of the knout rather than that of Tolstoy's and Kropotkin's dreams. He used to revel in the thought of Potemkin's pomp and glory, and Catherine II's portrait given to some chamberlain ancestor had a place of honor in his room.

He retained the admiration for *La Sainte Russie* that he held on his mother's side, as well as his great wealth and the strain of madness prevalent in the Balsh family to which she belonged. Those of the name claimed descent from the Counts des Baux whose ruined fortress-castle still dominates the mellow Provençal landscape. They were wandering knights and crusaders whose heirs changed name and abode so often that their remote origin is almost impossible to trace. Del Balzo in Naples, Balsha in Zenta, Dukes of Saint Sebba in Hungary, they came to Roumania some time in the sixteenth century, roamed Poland and Russia, where Léon Ghyka's grandfather, George Balsh, was Marshal of the nobility of Bessarabia, a title existing in all *governias*, or provinces in the Russian Empire.

"You see, Anne-Marie," he used to tell me, "the Russians are tall, they are strong, they are handsome. Theirs is the future of Europe. They will conquer her. . . ." Maybe he was right, they are trying to, but not in the way he foresaw. The 1917 Revolution, a rude awakening from his realm of illusions and lingering souvenirs, broke his heart.

When I last lived in Roumania many a singular character had vanished. The era of the uncontrolled eccentric was visibly dying out. Numbers of unexpected, odd or crazy people may have crossed my path since my youth, yet the feeling remains that the days of quasi-mad originality are fading all over the world. More homicidal

or warlike maniacs are replacing former peaceful eccentrics. Could they only flourish on a soil of leisured luxury? Or are we only aware of the whims and idiosyncrasies of the wealthy and conspicuous? My childhood was simply overwhelmed by tales of crazy, inbred people.

In Roumania madness was considered a sad "Gift of God" rather than an illness to be cured by specialists. Peasants and middle classes thought it was almost a sin to have a parent or relative sent to a lunatic asylum, and in past times this equally applied to the wealthy, who had their mad folk in their midst, or tended under very special conditions.

Families hardly seemed to notice the queer behavior of some of their members and were quite astonished if an unwarned foreigner shrank in shocked surprise when told by a sedate smiling old gentleman, "You know, I am a very precious teapot, to be handled with great care."

Sure enough, he moved about cautiously—one hand on his hip, figuring the handle, the other arm raised, bearing his hand in the shape of a delicate spout.

Another one I knew had a cruder mania: imagining he was the stud bull, supposed to start the cows on the farm; he paced the village, a large bell dangling from his neck. Drawing logical consequences, his behavior with the peasant girls became so outrageous he finally had to be certified.

Owing to the normal aversion for internment, the Senadino brothers, who were Bessarabian landowners of Greek origin, members of the first short-lived duma, and famous in Russia for their wealth and herds of karakul sheep, had built for their insane mother in the vast gardens adjoining Odessa's madhouse a special villa, complete with silent doors, corked walls, and padded bedroom. In this illusion of freedom, the old lady lived with a whole staff of servants, cooks, nurses, and her personal doctor in attendance.

The first fairly tame lunatic I ever met gave me an unforgettable

fright. Princess Matthew Cantacuzene, my aunt Anna's grandmother-in-law, had for long weary years nursed her mad husband, seen him die, then herself lost her reason. Hers was a mild form of fixation, which, however, did not allow her an instant of respite: she fancied she had lost her crown and endlessly searched for it all over the large suite of rooms she occupied in her son's country house. Silence reigned in her apartments ruled by an old, devoted nurse. Habitually she was calm, busy with her eternal search, but the sight of any newcomer could throw her into wild fits of screaming rage, and piercing cries of "thieves!". I was only seven when, staying for the first time with my newly married aunt, I was strictly forbidden to go near that mysterious part of the long, low, flat Baleni house. This was enough to arouse my irresistible curiosity and, at the first unguarded moment, I rushed into the sacred rooms, there to be faced by a thin, little old lady, all in black with sleekly brushed black hair, who at my appearance burst into terrific high-pitched screams, rushed toward me, then collapsed in a violent fit of hysteria. I ran away, panic-stricken, yelling in almost shriller tones than the mad woman herself. No punishment or threats were necessary to keep me away from the dreaded spot, but each time I later entered those now normal rooms, an echo of that mad voice still seemed to resound in their walls.

Tragic, grotesque, or pathetic, hundreds of similar cases studded Moldavian country homes, due to inbreeding or primitively treated venereal disease, so frequent in our parts. But almost unfailingly the determining cause of the crisis was a thwarted or unhappy love—all important love, always present in my uninhibited country's annals or stories.

On the top of a mountain near his family estate, a man, once a cultured writer and excellent businessman, was ending his life in acute mania and deep idealism. He had, in his brilliant youth abroad, fallen in love with a clever, beautiful Nordic woman, wife of Ibsen's best friend, and herself a philosopher of sorts. Some madness must have lingered there too; for, years later, was it not rumored that her

daughter, an almost mystically inspired interpreter of Ibsen's plays, had actually committed suicide at the end of an all too realistic performance of *Hedda Gabler*?

But it was the mother who had eloped and converted her young Roumanian lover to the mysteries and arcana of theosophy. This happened at the turn of the century in Geneva, where my husband was at college. At first creating a great sensation, the affair had gone on for a time; then gossip had died out, and apparently emotions as well. Shattered, the young man had resumed his Roumanian country life, never married, and had slowly gone strange in the mind. Summer and winter alike, he lived isolated in a small mountain hut, wearing old, patched-up clothes, eating wild herbs and roots, except when his anxious mother sent a messenger from the valley to enquire about his health and bring him some provisions and books; for he had remained keen on works of the spirit, but despised the more substantial foods of the body. He still professed theosophy and wished to end his days like an Indian fakir. Long hours of sleep, he decreed, were degrading to the soul. Consequently a shepherd tending the nearby herd had to keep watch all through the night and ring a shrill bell every hour to prevent his drifting into deep slumber. This went on for years. Then through instinct, or I imagine rather some stray paper which may have reached him, he became cognizant of his beloved's death. He showed no outward sign of grief, but slowly started starving himself. Nothing could stop him. Three months later, he too was dead.

Madness was in the blood. His aunt, beautiful Princess Stourdza, had been married off as a mere child to an aged eligible husband, but had soon after fallen in love with a fascinating neighbor, young Count Candiano de Roma. Faced with the dilemma of being unfaithful to her husband or to herself and utterly miserable, she chose a desperate solution. Her best Arab horse was saddled: in top hat, flowing veil, and long riding habit, she set off alone for a distant mountain ridge. By a deep ravine she knew well, she picked up the

reins and jumped to her death in the roaring stream. Roma remained single and disconsolate, devoted to his family, including a sister (who developed acute religious mania) and two charming orphan nephews.

Love had sometimes less tragic, but almost as spectacular effects on those romantic, unbalanced brains. Adèle Cantacuzene-Pashcano was one of those. Very young, she had fallen passionately in love with George Stirbey, son of the reigning Prince of Wallachia, a young man endowed with all qualities and charm, who seemed to reciprocate her feelings. Yet, for some unknown reason, he delayed proposing, and the offended Cantacuzene parents forced their daughter to wed an eccentric Roznovano cousin, owner of the handsomest Empire country house and largest properties in Moldavia. Shortly thereafter, Prince Stirbey reappeared, now decided—but alas!—too late. Adèle was heartbroken, lost her gay laughter, and some of her balance too. She tried in vain to forget, bore two boys, divorced her first husband, again too late, for by now her beau had married his housemaid and settled abroad. She remarried, took lovers, became a widow, then gradually sank into deep melancholia, and a fixed idea developed in her tortured brain.

He would come back some day and they would be forever happily united. He might return any minute, and she must be ever ready to greet him. So, each night, alone in her isolated country home, she changed into full evening dress, grand décolleté, with some of the famous Pashcano jewels. The choice was large: it might have been the enormous cabochon emeralds, set in honeycombed gold mounts; the heavy blood-red rubies; the renowned glittering Cantacuzene opals, larger than pigeons' eggs. On a duller evening, a set of garnets or amethysts might come to light, or perhaps large uneven pearls.

Every night, the house ablaze with candle-filled chandeliers, curtains drawn back, windows wide open, the old, now very stout lady waited hopefully for her lost love, who never returned. Weary and desperate, she finally went to rest in the small hours of dawn, only

to start again her vigil on the following evening. Night after night, year after year, she vainly waited, until one fateful hour a man did come, not the one she had so long expected, just a pale-faced murderer, attracted by the glitter of her jewelry. No sound was heard; the corpse never revealed its secret. A case, brought up before the Jassy court, failed as neither criminal nor jewels were ever traced. Old Adèle had died in solitude and mystery. Gossip, however, had it that her son's lovely, red-haired Russian mistress had, just at that time, disappeared too, leaving no trace, claiming no money. This story happened less than twenty years ago, in our practical, so-called "civilized" times, but somehow it sounds centuries old.

Luckily, not all my stories are so gloomy. Some sound like practical jokes devised by a childish mind. Such was the ridiculous diplomatic incident created in the early eighteen forties by the then reigning Princess Bibesco, born Vacaresco, a distant aunt of mine, when in a furious rage she threw her slipper at the head of her French lady's maid, who immediately complained to her Consul General, thus putting the principality in the most incongruous and awkward position. Eventually Prince Bibesco made the required official apologies and the incident was hushed up. . . . For the sake of that same lovely lady, who had gone off to marry her princely lover in foreign parts, and who, returning with her newly wedded husband, was driving back at dusk to Bucharest, my great-grandfather, Count Philip de Linche, gave orders to set on fire the forests of his estate to light the difficult roads for the enamored couple.

Money values were obviously different in those days. In 1852, Constantine Vacaresco inherited his own father's vast estates and carefully managed fortune. The bequest included a tall Biedermeier walnut chest of drawers, full of grain gold dust neatly tied up in small bags. They were the product of the gold-carrying river Buzău, which yielded a handsome income without cost, as the draining and sieving was done by the slaves of the reigning princess whose dowry was the grains of gold. Princess Elisabeth Ypsilanti had presented

her only and beloved brother Theodore Vacaresco with these treasures, found intact at his death. On discovering this booty, his son without a minute's hesitation packed up, in a large traveling coach, his mistress, his daughter and son—my grandfather, who later told me the story—and started on a trip I have earlier described. But what Grandpa did not tell me was the strange tale running about his own birth, which might have been an excuse for some of his father's later misbehavior.

Constantine Vacaresco had, as was customary for young noblemen not entering the army, begun his political service as Prefect of Targovishte, a province not far distant from the capital. One late night he was driving home from Bucharest, where he had received instructions from the Government, and in order agreeably to surprise his young wife, he silenced the loud cries of his postilions, had the harness bells muffled, and arrived noiselessly at his house. He quietly descended from his post carriage and proceeded to the front door of the residence, only to find it closed and everything dark and silent. Astonished and curious, he went round the single storied house; not a sign of life. Hélène must have gone to bed. So he would go and knock at her window. But stop! a ray of light was filtering through the curtains of that one and only window. He drew nearer, hesitating to give her a fright. Peeping quietly through the panes, he received a shock . . . his wife was not alone. . . .

Just as silently as he had come, he withdrew, went back to his postilions and coach, entered it, and gave orders to drive full speed, all bells ringing and men shouting, thrice around the main streets of the small sleepy town. When, an hour later, he alighted at his front door, the house was fully lit up, the servants were on duty, and his wife awaited him in evening dress. A son was born some time later. The mystery was never solved, and I cannot even vouch for the truth of this family scandal.

Of the authentic family remembrances my favorite one was linked with a charming old country house near Maneshti, already derelict

in my childhood, once the home of Grandpapa's great-aunt, Princess Cleopatra Troubetzkoy, widow of a Russian general, who was herself for long years attached to the Court at St. Petersburg. After her son's untimely death, she had retired, impoverished and lonely, to her Roumanian estate of Baicoi, where she made Russian customs prevail. The house and grounds were still kept in semiluxury when, in 1877, a Russian army crossed through Roumania to go and fight the Turks; and it was quite natural, considering past Russian ties and connections, for her to receive some general and his staff on their way to the Danubian battlefields. The first one billeted on her unexpectedly turned out to be a former friend. As a lieutenant, he had come over with Kisseleff's Russian occupation, in the far-off days when Troubetzkoy was courting her.

Before dinner, mellowed by warmth and vodka, this weathered warrior began recalling bygone times, questioning about things and people he had then known.

"Please tell me, Princess," he enquired, "what happened to that lovely young woman I so much admired, who was so kind to me . . . Madame Barcanesco . . . Didine her first name. A relative of yours, I believe? Do you think I might have an opportunity of offering my homage?"

"Oh, my sister," the Princess began. Before she could go further, coming from apparently nowhere, a voice was heard, a shrill yet broken voice suddenly butting into the conversation, "Didine?—Dead. She is dead . . . years ago. Young, beautiful, and loving, just as you knew her. She is dead. . . ."

Cleopatra Troubetzkoy gasped, but remained silent. Turning to the little old lady, whose crumpled shape hardly emerged from behind the large tiled stove where she was crouching, the General said, "Dead! How sad, so many memories. She was so charming and lively—"

The conversation took a different turn, dinner was served, the subject forgotten. Much later when all had retired, Princess Cleopatra

went to her sister's room—and in an indignant tone said, “Didine, why on earth did you tell the General you were dead? You almost made a fool of me. Will you please explain?”

“Explain, what? Can't you understand without my explaining? He once was in love with me. Why should he see me, old and decrepit, hovering in corners, when the vision he preserves of me is so perfect. Let him believe I am dead and keep his illusions.”

On this story, which I specially liked, already understood, and still better appreciated in more mature days, I will end my string of tales—some of which I have lived through; others, like this last, related by Granny, who had been an eyewitness to the Baicoi scene, merely distant echoes of vanished days. Each and every one is typical in my mind of my country, now so remote that I feel as if I were talking of another age on a different planet.

Child to Flapper

BRINGING far-reaching influences upon my development, the year 1906 was opening. During that year premature emotions, a religious crisis, mental evolution, all foreshadowed later opinions and attitudes. The child vanished in me; the girl I was and the woman I am, were subconsciously born and slowly began to develop.

In spite of rumors and unsavory realities I had, until then, implicitly accepted the ideas and principles I was taught. I worshiped my distant, too rarely seen father, believed in God and his Church, and behaved more or less as I was told. My spirit of contradiction was not yet fully aroused. My early discovery of Descartes and the works of some German philosophers had not shattered my simple faith; no religious doubts had touched me. I liked the spectacular ceremonies of the Greek Orthodox Church to which I belonged, and scrupulously followed its strict and elaborate rites.

Unintentionally Papa started the trouble, in a manner I now judge perfectly normal and legitimate, but which at the time irretrievably upset me. I found no fault with—rather secretly admired—the extravagant disorderly life he led much to the despair of his saintly mother. His successes partook of the myths and fairy tales I otherwise so much disliked, but had a sort of live, earthy flavor I already appreciated. Besides, his affairs were beyond the range of my vision and, therefore, entailed no personal emotion. Nothing in him shocked

me, for I was virtually in love with him. I did not know, when he broke my heart, that I was paying this heavy penalty for having discovered, before Freud formulated it, this Oedipus complex.

I did not realize why Papa, with forty-two horses in his stables, chose, on cold winter nights, to use a hired cab driven by one of those mysterious Russian *škaptsi birjars* (a religious sect believing in early castration, but only after two children have been conceived) under pretext that his precious thoroughbreds might catch a chill. The truth was that he preferred his grooms and private coachman not to penetrate the privacy of his nightly jaunts. His Russian driver, Nicolushka, was passionately devoted and reliably tongue-tied. Dressed in the classical droshky driver's outfit, blue velvet caftan heavily flounced around the waist, girdled with a metal-studded belt, and trimmed, by my father's wish, with sable collar and cuffs, he would sit upright on his box until dawn without his thin, parched lips uttering a word of reproach or his shrill voice giving vent to anything but praise of "Master Radu."

When the lawsuit about my mother's estate and the threat of bankruptcy loomed, my grandmother, anxious to save the situation, miraculously contrived to get her son engaged to the richest heiress in the country, a girl well-born, well-educated, plain, and dazzled by Papa's accomplishments. But could he be reasonable, accept the ordeal, and behave properly? Not he! Yet I do not believe he wrecked the whole plan on purpose; he just could not adapt himself to such schemes.

Conforming to the fashionable Roumanian custom, his fiancée left for Paris with her mother to order her complete trousseau. When the Orient Express halted in Vienna's central station, where it usually stopped for over half an hour, the whole place was in a hubbub because a large colorful party was preparing to board the Paris train. Attracted by the extraordinary agitation on the platform, the passengers hurtled to the windows, the bride-to-be among them. Who should appear but her future husband devotedly escorting his flashy

French mistress, accompanied by her sister, two maids, dogs, and a parrot, plus four horses and their two grooms in a special van attached to the convoy. The meeting was preposterous. Fainting fits, tears, and a broken engagement followed. The scandal was immense, so widespread it quickly reached my ears, and without clearly understanding its implications I found the story grand—just because I hated any potential stepmother.

Yet she had to come. Years after the Vienna incident, around 1905, my father started an affair, resounding like all his activities, with a young, married woman belonging to Bucharest's fast set, and was cited as corespondent in her divorce, something virtually unknown in the annals of Roumanian divorces which are usually granted on grounds of mutual consent or incompatibility. My father did not care: he was in love and willing to marry Jeanne Olanesco. For my grandmother the blow was terrible, shattering her last hopes of a rich alliance, sharpening her prejudice against divorce and her dislike of her future daughter-in-law. She was prostrate, but bore her grief with dignity and silence. Though she cried in the privacy of her room, she made great efforts to be kind to my father's bride.

With me the crisis went deeper than silent despair, and I fear I never brought myself to behave nicely or at least tactfully to my stepmother, whom I really loathed. Never had I conceived sharing my father's affection with another woman, or rather with a woman of whom I was aware. My confidence in men was severely shaken, and I have never since completely trusted any man's feelings.

This attitude was obviously unjust to my father who surely had a right to rebuild for himself a happy life without frustrating mine. Yet his marriage created a long-lasting rift between us which I felt unequal to bridge and he unable to understand. We became estranged, and our relationship remained uneasy even when as a widower he came to live in my house.

Simultaneously, and in connection with this family event, I underwent a deep and decisive religious crisis. Until then the pure simplicity

of my religious creed was disarming. Once, however, I grew curious about the dogmatic differences separating the Greek Orthodox Church from the Roman Catholic. These differences, I knew, had their origin in ancient quarrels over dogma, had been intensified through the centuries, and finally sealed by the Great Schism of the Ninth Century when Patriarch Photius of Byzantium and Nicholas I excommunicated each other. I also knew that the Greek Church denied all Roman dogma, including the proclamation by Pope Pius IX in 1871 of the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. But these were much too sophisticated and scholastic problems for me to solve on my own, and I appealed to Granny for enlightenment. Instead of giving me a simple explanation adapted to my understanding, she referred me to the safest dogmatic authority she could lay hands on. A well-known and highly regarded Bishop, Nifon of Ploeshti, was selected to give me a full course on religion, which turned out to be a fundamental mistake.

As with the majority of the Greek Orthodox clergy, his knowledge was inadequate, or so it appeared to me. His teaching was theoretic, taking no account of my spiritual needs. When my queries became embarrassing he just told me, "You must believe without questioning."

This went against the trend of my rationalistic and inquisitive mind. Seriously upset, I began to doubt the Church if not the Gospel. Something was painfully dying in me. I refused to go on with my lessons, hoping that if left to my own devices I might recapture some peace of mind.

But Bishop Nifon remained my confessor, so when my father decided to remarry, I turned to him in my sorrow, asking to be received because I had something important to confess. I did not see him in church but in his small private dwelling which adjoined the Metropolitan Cathedral. The room was small and dark, with a cumbersome round table covered with the same patterned plush used for the curtains and armchairs. Mediocre religious paintings hung on the drab

walls, and in one corner a silver church lamp burned in front of a modern ikon. The whole decoration had a suburban flavor. The Bishop, in his long black cassock with enameled pectoral cross and tall black headgear like a truncated velvet chimney pot with a long floating black veil, was quite majestic in comparison.

I tried shyly, haltingly, but frankly, to explain my difficult case. I thought I was somehow in love with my father—could not get over the idea of his remarrying, hated his future wife, felt badly about everything and everybody. Was this a sin? What was I to do? I felt confident he would advise me: I looked up to him for help.

He did not take the matter kindly. With more knowledge of psychology, or just the human heart, and a Christian understanding, he could have swept these thoughts out of my mind and sent me home reassured and exorcised of my youthful fears. On the contrary, he appeared utterly taken aback and told me he had never heard of such horrors. Here was a deadly sin for which I would eternally burn in the hell of the damned.

He did worse than not trying to set me straight. Forgetting a confessor's vow of secrecy, he went straight to my grandmother, turning my tale of woe into a hideous drama. I was subsequently preached at and admonished, shown the enormity of my fault and the horror of such criminal thoughts, which must be concealed if I could not control my feelings. In short, my elders did everything in their power to shatter my faith in a God whose ministers no more held confession holy. I was not mature enough to discriminate. I underwent the most heart-rending religious crisis which turned me into a complete rebel who refused to attend Confession, Communion, or even divine service if it could possibly be avoided; but I weakened in respect to religious ceremonies because I adored their pomp and the glorious harmonies of the plain chant. I have often regretted in hours of distress the simple orthodoxy of my childhood, but sincere faith cannot be conjured up on command. My attitude grieved and shocked my

family, but it was not in my power to change. I had taken religion too seriously now to compromise on empty gestures.

Thoroughly upset I reluctantly prepared to stand by at my father's wedding. The marriage took place in May, and my attendance was violently criticized by Bucharest society as being highly unsuitable. Little did they know how gladly I would have avoided that ordeal. Of the bride's faultless clothes and striking appearance I noticed nothing; I saw only her exaggerated make-up and a disfiguring boil on her turned-up nose, and only heard my own tears choking in my throat.

My judgment of my stepmother was extremely unfair; my behavior a blend of outrageous callousness and remorseful sensitivity to her efforts at being agreeable. Unable to realize the unexplainable yet strong appeal she emanated, I criticized her round face, thick smiling lips, and the short-sighted blink marring her otherwise lovely hazel eyes. The extreme elegance of her figure I was at pains to admit.

In the depths of my heart I accused her of robbing me of my father's affections and endeavored to render her family life most unpleasant. It was an ugly, facile task, since she never quite fitted into our clanlike tribe that clung together in spite—or rather because—of envy and intrigue. Not an ounce of these defects entered Jeanne's bright gay nature. Duplicity might have been easier to forgive than straightforward simplicity allied to an even temper.

My grandmother continued to dislike her for purely personal reasons, overlooking her son's great happiness with a wife who made him an attractive home, kept him amused and out of his usual financial troubles, and managed to be perfectly dressed and entertain agreeably on much less than any other woman might have done. Jeanne had all the taste my family lacked. Originality and skill presided over the decoration of her house, which she filled with delicious old French furniture brought from Paris or odd bits ferreted out in some Bucharest junk shop. She had the art of making

her home a welcome meeting ground for all my father's and her own friends.

I alone refused to be a frequent visitor. Later I much regretted my stubbornness when my stepmother, barely ten years older than myself, died from a short tragic illness eighteen months after my own marriage. With a better sense of proportion, I at last realized how precious her influence and companionship had been to my father, who bitterly and sincerely mourned her.

Returning to the year 1906—its glorious summer saw the opening of Bucharest's International Exhibition whose brief existence brought a welcome diversion into my life. The whole scheme had been conceived and elaborated by the Minister of Agriculture as an homage to King Carol I, whose thirtieth year of reign this happened to be. Not an anniversary habitually celebrated, it came handy as a pretext to show the largest possible crowd of foreigners and buyers a survey of the country's development during the last three decades.

On a suburban height, near the city's largest cemetery, a new park was laid out, making use of the land's natural hills and declivities to create pleasant perspectives. An artificial lake was installed in whose waters a tiny mosque complete with miniature minaret, a copy of an ancient boyar's house, and a large clumsy museum mirrored their whitewashed walls. Many other imitations or reproductions of old buildings emerged from the indifferent greenery of the Park Carol—on the whole an expensive failure since the spot remained out of the way for both wealthy and the poor. It ended as a lovers' meeting place, one where the certainty of never encountering friends or acquaintances was a boon. If by chance one did, they probably were under similar stress and bound to discretion out of sheer solidarity.

The Minister who had sponsored and organized this fair, John Lahovary, happened to be my new stepmother's father; his second daughter was Princess Marthe Bibesco; and his two younger ones I had known since my donkey cart days. So his whole family was supposed to patronize assiduously the entertainments, games, merry-

go-rounds, excellent restaurants with marvelous *tzigane* bands, open-air dance floors, and to fulfill every night its patriotic duty by having all the fun it could. Nobody enjoyed this unfamiliar night life more than I, although with my thirteen years, long loose hair, and ill-shaped figure I was rather young to partake of such adult amusements. But my father knew I adored grown-up parties, and his wife thought them a pleasant way of winning my friendship. How could Granny find the strength to object, realizing that Papa was rather proud of me and somehow found me a credit in society.

King Carol, to whom the exhibition was dedicated, and his Queen rarely appeared in its precincts. I cannot remember having seen them there except on the opening day, which was quite an event. The official ceremony took place in a sham Roman arena, built for the occasion, at eleven o'clock in the morning under a scorching sun. The men were pitifully sweating in their frock coats or tight-fitting uniforms; the women, more in keeping with the season, wore elaborate pastel summer gowns and large straw hats trimmed to resemble garden paths, aviaries, stuffed birds, or forests of rigid ospreys. Correct and stiff, the pale, bearded King read his inaugural speech in perfectly worded Roumanian rendered practically unintelligible by his strong German accent. A wealth of florid harangues followed. The people cheered, yelled, and occasionally fainted, until a final pageant of Roman soldiers in full armor, with helmets and flowing cloaks, paraded through the arena, offering the royal pair the Roman salute.

Thirty years of life amid Roumanian superficiality and quick Latin wit had little altered the fundamental Germanic heaviness of our old royal couple in spite of Carmen Sylva's flights of inspiration or the King's political tact, diplomatic skill, well-balanced judgment and shrewdness of purpose. They were a highly moral couple, in a serious, stolid manner, commanding the Roumanian people's respect and perhaps admiration, but not its gay, lighthearted love—that all went to the princely couple, the Heir Apparent and his lovely

wife. There was a shade of awe in the popular regard for the stern life led at the old court within a very restricted circle of aging officials and behind sealed doors.

Quite different was the atmosphere at the Palace of Cotrocheni, a rambling unshapely building set in a large garden on the fringe of the town where the "young court" resided. The princely household was gay and social, with a coterie of lively young couples and amusing bachelors gathering around the Crown Princess, the leader and ornament of this spirited group. Being asked by Princess Marie to one of her evening parties was more of a joy than an honor, as any suggestion of official flavor was banned from these intimate receptions. They were held in the Princess' newly redecorated private boudoir, really an enormous room, in which she had allowed her imaginative fantasy to run unbridled.

The walls, covered in heavy, hieratic moldings, were gilt from top to bottom. The vaulted ceiling, weighted with cornices and carvings, was an equally shimmering canopy. All this glitter was dimly reflected in the tiled floor, water-green, glazed, and shiny as the lining of a swimming pool. Bronze chandeliers, enormous jars filled with white lilies and tall exotic plants, made this room reminiscent of both a church and a Turkish bath. Crossing its threshold, one hesitated between horror and laughter and then decided to concentrate on the hostess, beautiful in brocaded silks, or floating gauzes, wearing heavy barbaric jewelry designed to fit the setting, which suited her to perfection.

Queen Marie had then just discovered Byzantine glories, and their clumsy interpretation in this room was her first attempt at conveying a "Low Empire" impression. I believe she had the room later altered but preserved the large marble tables, comfortably cushioned stone benches, and the leopardskins and fur rugs spread over couches and armchairs. It was in the initial version, however, that the Princess presided over her weekly parties which were devoted to various unexpected occupations like carving and burning neo-Byzantine motifs

on wooden panels, framing the stylized water colors or blooms and branches the Princess painted, or just acting charades and playing parlor games.

Unlike many beautiful women, Princess Marie did not dread competition and surrounded herself with the loveliest of her generation. Marthe Bibesco headed the group, and her sister Jeanne Vacaresco soon also became a great favorite, both because of her genuine social gifts and her skill as an amateur actress. Severed for a time from the young court by his long stays abroad and noisy escapades, my father was brought back into the circle through his wife's achievements and success.

Other members of the Lahovary family were prominent in this set, the most spectacular Bucharest had known for many a decade. My stepmother's cousin, Simky Lahovary, was just beginning to attract the Princess' growing sympathy and friendship and to develop the unwavering devotion which was to last for the better part of twenty-five years in the role of tactful lady-in-waiting and trusted companion. Possessing her kin's acute political instinct, she used it skillfully, with a shrewdness occasionally verging on intrigue, but always for what she considered the Queen's advantage or the country's good. I would not put it beyond her to have had more than one change of Government or diplomatic move to her credit. Accompanying the Queen in various travels, her international acquaintance ranged widely, and the brilliant retorts she would flash at gasping diplomats or amazed officials, without ever overstepping her part or making a faux pas, were appreciated and famous. Most persuasive when she chose, her whole diminutive, comfortably rounded person oozed gaiety and kindness. With liveliness in lieu of looks, Simky sounded in tune in any company or circumstance. Unhappily wedded to a clownish man, she soon divorced him never to remarry. No insidious gossip, however, ever seemed linked with her name, for all her time was devoted to the Queen's service.

As clumsy as she was deft, her brother Jeannot, almost blind with

myopia and incorrigibly absent-minded, made good for his shortcomings by an enjoyably paradoxical conversation. Yet another Lahovary was Nicholas, bearded and muzhik-looking. He was an extraordinary character, untidy and uncouth with no manners at all. Afflicted with a morbid "microbephobia," he added, when in a fit of terror, violence to his already odd behavior. Once, in the middle of a large dinner party, he snatched a glass out of my hand and flung it across the room because he imagined it was not spotlessly clean, a well-intended but most unpleasant gesture. Yet he was usually forgiven because of his affectionate nature, extraordinary sense of fun, and real kindness of heart.

Hélène Chrissoveloni ranked high among the beauties at the young court. Her exceedingly rich banker father was supposed to have started life as a peanut vendor or the like, and at times his origins still showed. Not so with his daughter. Small but perfectly proportioned, slim, with a purely chiseled Greek profile, delicate wrists and ankles, fine carriage, proud little head crowned with heavily jeweled black hair, she looked like a Gustave Moreau painting. To these physical endowments she allied a balanced quasi-mathematical brain and vivid intellect. She had then recently married Prince Dimitri Soutzo, who shared none of her mental gifts. His presence, fine horsemanship, and faultless manners were probably the only assets he had brought into this match, carefully planned by the young woman's parents. When later he succeeded in maintaining himself for a long while in the post of Roumanian Military Attaché in Paris, his wife was supposed to dictate his excellent reports, choose his staff, and carefully select the most responsible and clever private secretary. During the First World War Hélène met and, after a discreet divorce, married Paul Morand, then hailed as rising genius and surely a most promisingly original young author and diplomat. Later his literary work lost in proportion to what his diplomatic position seemed to gain. He put an end to his career by accepting the post of Vichy Ambassador in Bucharest and there sponsoring German propaganda.

Much more romantic was Princess Maruka Cantacuzene with her ethereal albeit dark beauty, tall slender body, and large, dreamy black eyes. She dreaded daylight and crowds, loved seclusion, intimacy, and eternal twilight. In a dim spacious room, scarcely lit by large oil jars on whose surface dancing little flames flickered beneath drooping flowers, she received reclining on a low divan from which she rarely rose even for royalty. Unaccustomed visitors faltered and stumbled at great risk of spilling the oil from the jars or arousing laughter; the more experienced gracefully waded through the danger zones. The violin of Georges Enesco never sang more beautifully than in her presence. Absolute silence reigned during the music; only some page, groping in the dark, would convey to a favored guest the hostess's scribbled messages, overflowing with rapturous comment. Now married to the Maestro, Madame Enesco still preserves her elegance, poise, and sense of mystery.

Obviously Maruka was ill-fitted to share the outdoor buoyance of the Park Carol festivities, but the Exhibition offered a welcome change to the princely court, and the whole younger set immediately contrived to add glamour to its simplest amusements. One particularly gay occasion I remember clearly. It was, I imagine, a joint affair, with Papa and Jeanne among the hosts, otherwise why should I have attended or so diligently adorned the menus with little pen drawings and carefully listed the various courses and wines? A long white table, laden with flowers, caviar, and drinks, stood on a terrace overlooking the lake on which glittered and trembled the reflections of shining stars mingled with those of Chinese lanterns and small float lights attached to wandering skiffs. From afar strains of gypsy music reached us.

Princess Marie was there, so magnificently blond, all lace and laughter. With her came the Crown Prince and their son Carol, and also her sister, Grand Duchess Victoria, and her newly wedded husband, Grand Duke Kiril of Russia. Fair, handsome, elegant, his appearance quite justified his wife's falling in love with him at

first sight. She was the second daughter of the Duke of Edinburgh, son of Queen Victoria of England, and had previously married the Grand Duke of Hesse, brother of Alexandra Feodorovna who was to be the last of Russia's Tzarinas. Both the Empress and Nicholas II led a strict, retiring family existence, and the unconcealed romance of Kiril and the Grand Duchess Victoria, culminating in the latter's decision to seek a divorce in order to marry this cousin of the Tzar, created havoc at the Court of St. Petersburg. The popularity and influence of the young man's father and mother, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovitch and Grand Duchess Marie, proved insufficient to ease the situation and smooth the Tzarina's ruffled feelings. Her Germanic vanity resented the slight endured by her brother; her newly acquired Greek Orthodox faith was shocked by these first cousins daring to be lovers and letting the world know it; her attitude made the scandal unavoidable. It was inexorably made known that, if they went through with their plans, exile would be the infallible result. So, without Imperial consent, the two got married and were blissfully happy in their ten years of gilded banishment. Not until the war of 1914, on the very eve of the Revolution, were they permitted to return to Russia. The first phase of the Revolution, and his exile activities, brought Grand Duke Kiril into the political limelight, but only briefly.

The couple's Bucharest stay occurred at the dawn of their European roamings. It was their first royal visit, and a controversial one, entailing some risks of Imperial reprisals showering upon Princess Marie's indifferent head. Tall, slim and well-built, the two made a handsome pair; watching them waltz in complete harmony was sheer delight.

The evening wore on gaily. Champagne flowed freely; so did hock and brandies. High spirits were infectious. I am still amazed that this unusual galaxy of wines and liqueurs did not affect me, for I was left without any supervision. But the company was cheerful, not alcoholic.

The party included our old friend Léon Ghyka, his partiality for the

fair enhanced by the presence—selling roses in some flower booth on the grounds—of Marcelle, the pretty mistress he ended by making his wife.

One guest, however, was a comparative newcomer to the group. I was not the only one at the table to have eyes just for him. Freshly arrived from the Borda, the French equivalent of West Point, very dark, with keen eyes, a fascinating manner of speaking, and a halo of culture and charm, he was an arrestingly attractive figure in his impeccable naval uniform. I could have watched and listened to him for hours. Was I a bit in love? Perhaps. Did he notice me? No. With sincere passion Matila Ghyka was aiming well above my head at the highest possible peak. Were rumor truthful, he was reaching his aim, or rather the heart he wished to touch. No scheming entered his devotion; to his emotional integrity his whole life stands witness. Whatever truth there may have been to this tale, no one could blame them for being in love and finding a real, if fleeting, happiness. Matila was faultless and charming; Princess Marie staggeringly lovely, young, overflowing with vitality. Had they not a right to some harmless delights which could only be short-lived?

Faintly I surmised the happenings around me. I was thrilled with my evening as the hours swiftly fled in the flash of fireworks and rockets and a final ride on the merry-go-round at dawn.

Whether in daylight, dusk, or dark, the favorite entertainment of the fair was the "water shoot," equally amusing to watch or experience. This contraption consisted of a high-pitched landing, reached by a great number of steps, from which one embarked in narrow little boats that were sent flying down on rails to be suddenly checked and land with a huge splash in the middle of the lake. They never appeared to turn over. None the less, one had a second of violent apprehension at the start followed by the intense exhilaration of speed and air despite an odd empty feeling in the pit of one's stomach, distasteful yet keen, like a sexual sensation. Watching was almost as much fun, for the scared expression and breathless gasping of elderly

ladies, who refused to admit their fright, struggling with outsized, overtrimmed hats, elusive feather boas, loosely pinned false curls, or flaring skirts were both pitiful and ridiculous.

After an entire summer of heat and Exhibition craze, our entire family withdrew to the country for the mild autumn months which were particularly lively at Maneshti that year. Because of Papa's young wife, and the three elder Ghika girls being of an age to get married, Granny consented to open her doors for some nimble entertaining. Those arranged meetings and "unexpected" visits achieved few results. Naturally my cousins fell in love, or imagined they did, apparently with the wrong men; shy hearts were half broken; passions flared and died quickly. At the close of the year one girl alone emerged engaged, more out of spite than love, I fear. In the process of watching my cousins courted I acquired new friends and with several developed ties which proved lasting.

Yet for a while I lost sight of them all because with a new year a new way of life was commencing for me. After 1907 we lived and traveled abroad. The days of my childhood had fled. I was becoming aware of human beings with their multifarious, strange, kind, or wicked behavior, and I was learning to look at places and people with a more discriminating appraisal.

Education and Travel

DESPITE storms in a teacup and worldly frivolities the steady background of the past years had remained my sedate studies. Nineteen seven was to take a different turn that would include political turmoil and acute anxieties.

Yet the new year fell upon us quietly, the only excitement revolving around a wedding. On Epiphany, the sixth of January, my cousin Sanda Ghika was getting married to a rather dry, unpleasant cousin of ours, and the glamour of her wedding was intended to compensate for the indifference of the match.

Those night weddings in Greek Orthodox churches are most spectacular. The clergy's rich, gold-damask vestments rival the Bishop's gilt crown which is encrusted with flamboyant enamels and studded with precious stones. Sacerdotal ornaments and clothes glitter in the amber light of the innumerable wax candles that illuminate the embossed altar screen, shimmering with gold, and the neo-Byzantine painted naves. Masses of flowers enliven the sanctuary with echoes to the tones of the Gregorian plain chant. A narrow channel of red carpet divides the church, separating the crowd of curious guests, equally eager to see and to be seen. Full regalia is compulsory. The men wear tails; the ladies are in low-necked dresses, trailing skirts, furs, and jewelry, a complete evening outfit but for their heads which must be covered with some hat or coiffure to conform with the Greek rite which sets

restrictions on women's bare hair but apparently not on their necks and shoulders.

By the entrance, in solitary expectancy, the bridegroom is waiting. Suddenly the choir strikes the first notes of a very mundane wedding hymn, and the bride makes her appearance, all white and gold, shrouded in long streamers of spun silver-gilt, descending like a hieratic mantle from head to heels. A lovely traditional ornament of immense weight, perfectly matching the shining surroundings.

Her hand in that of her mother's, who will give her away, the bride is taken to the altar ikon of the Virgin and bidden to kiss it before the religious service commences. It is a long, gloriously pompous ceremony filled with ritual chanting and unexpected features, such as the young pair's drinking out of the same glass and wearing gold coronets adorned with the Greek cross, and the dance or triple evolution around the center altar performed by the main officiant, his acolytes, and deacons, followed by the newly wedded pair and their sponsors, each carrying an enormous wax candle dripping with white blooms and ribbons. These two sponsors or godparents, preferably a happily married couple and under no circumstances a divorced person, have since the beginning of the service stood beside the bride and bridegroom, for a while holding the coronets over the pair's heads, then redeeming their hands' freedom after the exchange of the rings before the ritual dance that is symbolic of David dancing in front of the Ark of the Covenant.

Without a sermon (nonexistent in our creed) the lengthy ceremony is now drawing to its end; the final blessing is given, the cross and silver-bound Gospel kissed for the last time. Relatives and guests rush to congratulate the husband, wife, godparents, and whole family with cascades of embraces and kisses in true Oriental fashion.

There is no best man for our marriages, but each of the bridesmaids, carrying a large ornate basket, is accompanied by a young man whose task it is to help her distribute minute bunches of orange blossoms tied with silver thread among the guests to be attached to bodices or

lapels as tokens of presence at the wedding. The round is not always finished by the time the couple departs in state for the bride's house where the reception generally takes place. Such was the accepted version of a social wedding, and my cousin's proved true to type.

The short excitement of this event rapidly melted into the tranquil routine of my schoolroom. This routine I enjoyed now more than ever, for I lived in the hope of soon becoming better acquainted with the countries whose history, geography, and literature were imparted to me in a slightly unconventional but most attractive manner.

I cannot remember when and how I learned to read. It must have been almost unconsciously with my cousins, much my seniors, who spared me the painful spelling stages. Books were my companions from my earliest years when I would sit, a baby with a nursery-rhyme book in my hands, happily mumbling to the accompaniment of Nanny's ill-tuned falsetto. Writing was a different proposition and long a distasteful one. With sums I was simply hopeless. Christened mathematics, algebra, or plain arithmetic, they remained alien. My figures were clear, yet I could never add them without deftly employing my fingers under the table. I kept a printed multiplication table handy and even then made mistakes in my haste. No special teacher trying to coach me achieved any appreciable results.

When tuition became less casual, Granny insisted on having history taught to me on what she called horizontal, not vertical, lines. By this she meant that, instead of letting facts unfold in strips—for instance, Roumanian, French, English, or Italian history treated separately—she wished me to have a general view, a sort of synopsis coordinating contemporary events which were happening all over the world or the influence that an important crisis or battle fought at one end of Europe might have on the general evolution of the whole continent. She wanted me to have a complete historical picture of an age, not disconnected slices of knowledge that would be difficult to knit together in a coherent way.

When Mademoiselle Charier came to continue my education, she

did it efficiently and gaily. History was a continuous delight. She shared my passion for the French classics and made me learn by heart great quantities of prose and verse to keep my memory agile. In a way she succeeded, for many a poem still lingers in the back of my mind. My lesson chart was moderately heavy but peculiarly one-sided, for I studied only those subjects I preferred as my family had reached the conclusion I would never adopt a career or take a degree. I was given good rudiments of Latin, but anything connected with science, chemistry, physics, mechanics, and even such natural sciences as botany or geology, were completely neglected. This was to bring me some heartache over my ignorance in years to come. Philosophy I was taught early, and later in Paris I attempted a more serious, scholarly approach to the subject. Many trips and voyages were required to make me understand the necessity and appeal of geography. Naturally a certain amount of data on Byzantine culture and painting was poured into me. With literature I came into my own, since I could read the four most important foreign languages in the original texts. I was not forced into the outdoor games I disliked, remaining, as a result, regrettably short and for some years much too fat. My education, as I now look back on it, strikes me as a patchwork of good intentions.

To my grandfather, whom I otherwise so much resented, I am indebted for the fantasy this Teutonically pedantic man brought into his teaching. He fancied himself a teacher, and in my case really succeeded in arresting my interest and arousing my curiosity on varied and fascinating subjects.

Wearing a patterned, purple silk dressing gown, his monocle firmly fixed to his eye, he sat at his large desk littered with books, maps, reproductions, and numerous volumes of reference, and for hours would initiate me to the glories and intricacies of the Hapsburg dynasty—his favorite hobby—or the detailed history of the Italian Renaissance.

Time fled. Then he would casually interrupt his talk to sample, in

true oriental manner, a spoonful of rose jam washed down with a glass of iced water, after which he would resume his lecture on the differences between the various Italian schools of painting, endeavoring to open my eyes to all things beautiful without ever forcing me to accept his own rather conventional preferences. I was coached with a view to developing my own taste and judgment, as when Grandpapa let me loose, at the age of eleven, in the famous Salon Carré at the Louvre.

In this spacious, richly decorated room—I can still visualize it in spite of the changes that have been made since—there were in those days assembled the most perfect specimens of Italian paintings, belonging to different schools.

“Now, Anne-Marie, you just go quietly around this room. Look carefully at all the pictures. Take them in as best you can. Then come back and point me out the ones you prefer, and try to explain why they most struck you.” (I liked this way of seeing galleries.)

Since childhood my life had been divided between Bucharest, Maneshti, and short summer stays abroad. In the seclusion of my schoolroom I did not realize that growing unrest was rising among the peasantry all over the country. How could I? The Government itself was taken by surprise.

The evolution from the concept of possession without responsibility to that of ownership with consciousness of its duties and obligations is a very modern one. In feudal-minded countries few seemed aware that there was injustice in the proprietor's holding thousands of acres, many hardly cultivated, and ignoring the claims of those working and sweating on the land. In Roumania, where the last traces of serfdom—the liberation of the gypsy slaves—disappeared only in 1848 and where just one serious agrarian reform (1866) had occurred, the general outlook was still amazingly feudal. With rare exceptions, the landowner's attitude toward the peasants attached to his estates was a harsh and inconsiderate one. Fewer yet were concerned with solving rural problems. The majority relied securely

on the slogan, "What was good for my father will be good enough for me."

To my family, smugly confident in the weak, antiquated Conservative Government headed by George Cantacuzene, a wealthy old man familiarly nicknamed "The Nabob," the upheaval came like a thunderbolt in a clear sky. Nobody heeded the needs and demands of the peasantry, or took notice of a "Red" newspaper's flaming articles of protest against the existing state of affairs. Nobody realized the analogies between the miserable state of our villagers and that of the Russian muzhiks, who had recently staged the abortive revolution of 1905 which achieved only harsh repression followed by the well-meant but minor Stolypin reforms. Therefore when the Roumanian rising started in Botoshani, practically on the Russian border, few drew the logical conclusions, and nobody foresaw immediate danger.

In a matter of days, arson and looting swept the country. Landowners' houses went up in flames; stored crops burned like torches; murders were rare, but some hated farmers met a tragic end. Rumor had it that bands of armed rebels were marching toward the panic-stricken capital. On the twenty-fifth of March, ten days after the outbreak, the Government was compelled to resign and the Liberals came into power. A comparatively advanced political party, it was led by aged Dimitri Stourdza, now the Prime Minister, supported by a team of young virile men who would leave strong individual marks in the evolution and history of their country. The new Government's attitude was firm: armed repression would quench the revolt; immediate, if slight, agrarian reforms were formally promised to the country people, and their mere mention sufficed to pacify the land.

Justified or not, my admiration for the Liberals flared up. Thereafter I was virtually a member of the party, accepting their principles to which I later converted my husband. Vividly magnified, each detail of the rising, repression, and subsequent reforms engraved itself in my mind to be the source of my future political views and my be-

havior on my own estates. The staunch Conservative males of the family were shocked by my opinions, but I felt that Granny secretly backed me, for she herself had displayed unusual spirit during the crisis.

By birth she belonged to a Liberal family. Many decades before her father had plotted with Liberal rebels against feudal trends in Roumania, and Granny, despite not voicing her creed in front of a narrow-minded husband, had preserved her personal friendships. Now she acted according to both her instinct and her interest. Frightened lest her beloved Maneshti be damaged in the upheaval, perhaps also with a slight feeling of guilt at never having herself run the estate, she decided to go and talk in person with her peasantfolk. Her husband and son violently opposed this plan. Arguments raged at home, but Granny stood firm. With the aid of her own friends she would have her own way.

Her carriage summoned, on went her feathered bonnet, and off she drove to the Ministry of the Interior, presided over by Jon Bratiano, son of the man with whom her father had once plotted and fought. Her intention was to obtain an armed escort for her Maneshti venture. Wisely Bratiano dissuaded her from taking this step. If the village were calm, he said, this warlike arrival might create panic and trouble; if revolt had already started, it would prove insufficient. But would she consent to see Haret, the Minister of Education? He, a remarkably open-minded professor, had a strong hold on the peasantry, schoolteachers, and clergy. His advice might be helpful.

Grandpa almost forbade her to see a "Red," but her cause was too precious to leave time for hesitation, and Granny came back delighted from her interview with the scarlet monster. He had been helpful and precise, first getting in touch with the village teacher and priest (always leaders in our rural districts) and, when satisfied that order reigned, telling Granny she could set off accompanied only by a responsible delegate of the Ministry of Education.

Of her negotiations with the tenants and village leaders she told

us little, only that they assembled on the green outside our gates where she made them an offer they appeared to accept willingly. Forestalling the expropriation law, and as yet under no obligation, she settled with them whatever part of the estate she was prepared to hand over to the villagers. Everything was concluded well before the general revolt was over. Granny came back exhausted and shaken, rather silent, yet her goal achieved: Maneshti was untouched and further danger avoided. The strain, however, proved too much for her weakened heart. An acute attack followed shortly, and although Granny was to live for another eleven years, she remained an ailing woman, requiring great care and a complete change of regime.

Meanwhile, along with private emotions and the country's political turmoils, other, more flimsy rumors began to reach my ears. They came from people less harassed than ourselves, who had fled to safer spots than Bucharest, where we had spent the few hectic weeks of the upheaval. Many had thought it wise to send their families to some mountain resort, and the Crown Princess had retired with her four children to Castle Pelishor at Sinaia, isolated and empty during this early season. There were few neighbors, with the exception of Posada where Marthe Bibesco was giving hospitality to her sister-in-law, Princess Stirbey, and her four daughters. My stepmother was also there.

With male company grievously lacking, visiting husbands were undoubtedly welcome, above all so intensely attractive a specimen of virile masculinity as Barbo Stirbey. Extremely personable, elegant, dark without Oriental exaggeration, some strange hypnotic quality lingered in his beautifully expressive eyes. His manner was unassuming, yet full of charm; he spoke little, but a gift of persuasion and instinctive psychological insight made him rarely miss his aim whenever he set himself one. Extraordinary was the way he always struck the right note.

He took far-reaching views of all situations and often told me, "To govern is to foresee." Yet no premeditation marred the dawn of the

long-lasting romance that was born under danger and stress in those raw spring days. Stirbey must have been seriously concerned with the state of his properties and recent industrial ventures, badly mauled by the rioters, and Princess Marie's delightful sympathy surely brought relaxation from anxiety. That the attraction went a little further soon became visible.

Since he was reputed a devoted husband and loving family man, it took the public a long while to awaken to this budding affair. Anyhow, within a short span of time his feelings and attachment were so conspicuous that no doubt was possible for those who knew him. Riding the clouds, his wife remained blissfully oblivious and happy. The practical successes which followed were not due to his scheming: others did that for him. Wasn't Bratiano, the new Home Secretary and tomorrow's Prime Minister, his brother-in-law and friend?

The old King felt relieved at his niece's new relationship with a respectable family man, and bestowed upon him a high administrative position tightly connected with the Court. This post—Superintendent of the Crown Estates—brought Stirbey in daily contact with any member of the royal family he chose to see, giving him all facilities for inspection tours, long morning rides in the royal forests, one of which conveniently adjoined his own Buftea estate, or for organizing shooting or fishing parties on Crown domains. In all these activities the Princess enthusiastically joined. No admirer could have been more tactful and efficiently influential at the same time. His shrewd judgment and diplomatic abilities made him a valued negotiator in home politics and almost a power behind the throne well before the accession of Marie and Ferdinand. After that he became instrumental in Roumania's international pro-Allies attitude. Because he was not prone to seek the limelight nobody could, at the beginning, have anticipated his future attitude and power.

This story still retained the shape of a myth when we left Bucharest for Paris in the radiance of early May. We did this, in spite of

Granny's reluctance, to consult a great foreign specialist about her heart and to ensure a long period of quiet rest. Except for the anxious reason nothing could have pleased me more. We had no definite plans. Our wandering life of travel and sightseeing, mingled with study for me and recurrent illness for my aging grandparents, had now begun and would not stop until I settled in marriage.

Suddenly I felt my wings grow. Free to plan and decide our moves and journeys I became a different human being. We could cover well-nigh the whole of Europe, within the limitations imposed by Granny's frailness, which appeared to recede from the minute she abandoned the quarrelsome atmosphere created by her children. My new semiindependence and the joy of having Granny more to myself were the silver linings often apt to make me forget the heavy cloud of her latent illness.

Italy, France, Germany, boasted enough in the way of comfort for Granny and offered sufficient scope to my beginner's curiosity. In fact, I was just living my own version of the classical grand tour which generations of candidates to culture had sampled before me. I carried a copy of Ruskin under my arm during my Florentine mornings, as befitted a young girl of my day; quoted Goethe in Frankfurt, wishing myself Bettina Brentano; went all Byzantine and romantic in golden-pink Venice, as I sat on the rubble of the recently collapsed Campanile and wondered whether my prototype should be an ascetic Saint Ursula of Carpaccio or the pearl-laden head of Catarina Cornaro. Would I look like the impertinent profile of Beatrice d'Este if properly costumed? . . . Alas, I was born too late to play such parts, but what girl of fifteen has not cherished such dreams!

Mademoiselle Charier was a docile and knowledgeable chaperon for my wanderings, occasionally losing breath and speech, both mentally and physically, when faced by some of my whims and fancies, particularly when confronted with my mania for climbing any tower or church steeple that promised a lovely view. Usually she was resigned and excellent company. With her, appeasement, if

necessary, took a culinary shape; she would forgive me any caprice for the sake of a succulent meal. And always, under a thick pompadour of graying hair, her chubby face and piercing little black eyes radiated frank kindness and good humor, whether she was reluctantly pacing dusty ruins and Italian museums in the hope of a treat of white truffles, or lovingly showing me her native Touraine.

Very different was my grandfather's approach. A bully of sorts, with the best of intentions in his wish to develop my mind without heavily infringing on my just awakening personality, his teaching spread over museums and monuments, became a still greater mixture of pedantry and wide information, generously offered. No physical credit as an escort, he was an unparalleled guide to any place requiring encyclopedic knowledge. He had a mind like a dictionary, luckily relieved by a propensity to anecdote or amusing comment on irrelevant subjects brought in by devious means, such as a lecture on tree species in front of a Benozzo Gozzoli fresco.

Thus were our wanderings, more didactic than social, with no surprises, and few outstanding encounters. The most sensational of them was our visit to Princess Pauline Metternich, that lively relic of the Second Empire whom I had been brought up to respect and admire.

Mad curiosity and excitement mingled with my usual shyness, as we approached the imposing Palais Metternich, on the Rennweg in Vienna, when I was taken by Granny to be introduced to this now very old lady. Minute, slim, and agile, wearing black, with rows and rows of pearls, her swift gestures and mimicking expression still bore the "pet monkey" look for which she had been famed in her youth. Her tone of voice remained shrill, her conversation easy and entertaining, dwelling mainly on past glories, regret for gayer times, the present boredom of Vienna. I remember nothing to put on record, but each sentence was so wittily worded that I immediately recognized the sprightly quality of her charm. The slight, shrunken figure, the network of fine wrinkles covering her face, the sunken dark eyes,

were anything but lovely, yet emanated breeding and a strong and vivacious personality.

Measuring me with a rapid glance, she exclaimed, "*La fille de Rodolphe, ma chère? Vous avez bien fait de me l'amener; elle se souviendra de sa visite. Il est toujours beau? . . . et raisonnable? Non, il ne le sera jamais.*"

Sensing the subject might hurt Granny, she lightly changed the topic, then abruptly interrupted herself. "*Cette enfant va s'ennuyer. Qu'on lui fasse faire le tour de la maison.*"

Pulling the cord of an old-fashioned bell hanging by her Empire couch, she had the bowing footman summon her lady companion who was instructed to show me over the magnificent palace, built and furnished in days of power by her late husband's father, the great Chancellor of Congress of Vienna fame.

Leaving the ravishing paneled study on the second floor, where the Princess had received us, we passed through the adjoining library, lined with the Chancellor's books and harboring his large desk. From there I was conducted to the first floor which was entirely given over to receptions. Ballroom and drawing rooms, wide gallery, huge banquet hall, everything of vast proportions, elaborately decorated in keeping with the pure Empire furniture made of rare woods and heavily adorned with delicate ormolu bronzes. By the majestic double staircase, renowned in Vienna for its grandeur, we descended to the stately marbled entrance hall which occupies only part of the ground floor; the rest had once been used to house the private bodyguard attached to the Chancellor's spectacular person. Superb Aubusson carpets, designed and woven to measure for rooms and staircases, matched the soft shades of almond green, faded blues, and dull gold prevailing throughout the palace.

When I returned the two ladies were still absorbed in animated conversation. We soon took our leave, while Princess Metternich's legendary canary-yellow coach, littered with furs and covered with

crests, waited to drive her conservatively around the wide alleys of the Prater.

So we slowly journeyed around Europe as our fancy led us, while I gathered entrancing bits of miscellaneous knowledge. But in France lay the real roots of my education. Winters on the Riviera had only climate and lush vegetation to commend them. But the town I really knew, loved above all, was Paris. The pre-1914 Paris I adored and continuously compared with the one Granny had described in my childhood. Now I felt it was mine too.

My Paris

My heyday in Paris was that of the Franco-British honeymoon, the famous Entente Cordiale, for which King Edward VII was chiefly responsible, and which had won him the heart of France. It was an alliance resulting from a mutual fear of the growing power of Germany, but there were few outward signs of that fear. In spite of minor disturbances, small scattered wars or political stresses, it was a time of peace which, it seemed probable, would last forever. Living in a carefree, perhaps shallow, period, our unreflecting gaiety has never since been shared by any youthful generation. The general outlook was frivolous, and only a few, gifted with clear foresight, could perceive the coming drama which was to change fundamentally the style and conceptions of life.

It was in 1907. For seven years before the thunderbolt of the First World War Paris sparkled and shone. The most intelligent and witty of cities, versatile, stimulating, lovely, filled with greatness and vice, superficiality and depth, dreams and reality, who has ever caught and impaled her charm with words? It would be folly for me to try. But it was during these first years in Paris that I was to become aware of this city's manifold attractions. The arts, the theater, my studies, the architectural beauties, society, and the amusing and sometimes notorious personalities I met in this *ville lumière*, equally thrilled me. (Here, too, I was to endure the ordeals of the marriage market

and, at last, choose my future husband.) As I return to those happy yesterdays, the multitude of memories, impressions, and pictures is so overwhelming that all I can do is to pick just a few that have remained the clearest and most vivid.

Of the caprices of this feminine city I was warned practically on arrival.

"You are very young, Anne-Marie, to start your social life, but soon I will be introducing you to all of Paris I know. And I want to make you love and understand it. It is a discriminating, fastidious city which will reject you or take you to its heart according to its own standards and tastes, not at your face value. Kings have failed where near beggars have succeeded. I want *you* to be a credit to me. Society may be inconstant and the arts not easily accessible, but once Paris has adopted you, your success can be a lasting one. Look at me . . . !"

Tossing her little head with its black hair, ruddy cheeks and sparkling, shortsighted brown eyes, H  l  ne Vacaresco spoke these words in her customary emphatic tone. They were fairly true, and a perfect example of the blend of the shrewdness and na  ve conceit that ruled her actions. I was a Vacaresco too and her father's ward in addition, and she expected me not to let her down in her circle of society but somehow to be another trump card in the game she never ceased playing. For she herself had ably advanced on Paris' slippery ground and, knowing her subject well, she was a safe guide, as alert to Paris' reactions or whims as other women, in their task of marital management are aware of the whims of their husbands. This ability to survive and steer her personal ship of state was just as acute when the 1940 crisis arose.

She was delivering this, the first of countless lectures, in the rather drab, dark, typically uncomfortable furnished flat we had rented, opposite her own, which I visited at all hours. We had arrived in May, that loveliest of months. Our first days had been filled with the comings and goings of physicians and consultants until a definite

agreement among them satisfied us that Granny's state might be serious but was not one of imminent danger. Once my unnerving anxiety had been lifted, I was ready to enjoy my cousin H  l  ne's coaching.

A Roumanian spinster is a quasi-unknown species, but H  l  ne had used to her best advantage the intricate adventure which had driven her to give up marriage. Too short, too plump, too dark, she had never had beauty, but her vivacity and charm of manner gave her a real and winning attraction. She was brilliantly intelligent and also possessed remarkable culture, an unfailing memory, and a dazzling gift of expression. Recognized for these qualities by intellectual Queen Carmen Sylva, H  l  ne Vacaresco had at first been selected as a friend; soon she was appointed one of the Queen's maids of honor. The friendship grew into a great affection. H  l  ne was on duty the whole year round, and soon a mutual sentiment was born between her and the heir presumptive, Prince Ferdinand, the nephew of the childless King Carol I. In her blind affection, Carmen Sylva encouraged this budding romance, but reasons of state otherwise decreed. Roumania shared with practically all continental kingdoms the law of equality of birth in royal marriages, and my cousin lacked the required qualifications. In a slow, reluctant speech, the Prime Minister Lascar Catargi pointed this fact out to the King and the young Prince himself, "As a private subject, Your Royal Highness could not make a better choice than Mademoiselle Vacaresco, and I couldn't more approve of it. But the Heir Presumptive to our throne must marry a foreign Princess, equal in rank and birth, who can be his future Queen. The Constitution is quite definite on this matter."

The dilemma was a harsh one, and turmoil ensued. The idealistic Queen stood for love: King Carol I for the law. The Prince was hesitating, and the young girl distraught with grief. The Queen retired in semiexile to Venice, there to spend a doleful year with H  l  ne, prostrate at the feet of her beloved sovereign. On his way

to the Far East, Pierre Loti, in full vogue as a novelist, stopped to visit this pair of disconsolate women, then wrote a book about them, *L'Exilée*, which was banned in Roumania. In short sequence came the announcements of Crown Prince Ferdinand's engagement to Princess Marie of Great Britain and Saxe-Coburg, and of an early wedding date. Carmen Sylva was summoned home, leaving Hélène in tears over her short, empty romance. Her radiant dream, instead of a throne, had brought her only the general hostility of all Roumanian circles. My grandmother found this ostracism both mean and shocking and naturally never shared it. For years, however, Hélène Vacaresco remained a voluntary absentee from her unjust country, until her talents and character brought her official recognition and gratitude during the First World War.

With her romance shattered on the rock of political necessity Hélène moved to Paris. She was through with marriage. In place of the crown that had been denied her she would conquer Paris, and she set about her self-imposed task with her usually shrewd intelligence. Wealth, beauty, intellect, tact, might be the qualities deemed necessary for this achievement. Hélène obviously lacked the first two, but she had brains, was witty and cultured, her manner most appealing, and her tact impeccable. Her first volume of verse, *Rhapsody of the Dambivitza*, inspired by Roumanian folklore, had won her immediate literary recognition. Many a volume of verse and prose, all widely translated, were to follow before more political activities (such as, many years later, her role of Roumanian delegate to the League of Nations) claimed her energies.

One of the features of society of those days was the frequent sight of poetical ladies, standing stiffly and, with rolling eyes and expansive gestures, solemnly bellowing their lyric productions to yawning audiences. These authors were usually society women yearning for professional recognition. This novel mingling of the aristocratic and the literary, with a poetic sprinkling, offered new opportunities to an expert foreigner who was tied to no definite group, whose house

could become a meeting place for different sets, each eager to discover the other but somehow chained to its own environment by habit or lack of initiative. The possibility of linking opposites Hélène rapidly sensed and put to good use. Her acute social sense guided her well, and she achieved a growing and lasting fame, of which she proudly boasted. Paris adopted her. Hélène became popular with the most varied circles, social, intellectual, political, artistic, and cosmopolitan. By the time I arrived she was firmly established. With her customary determination she began to coach my inexperienced steps on Paris's delightful playgrounds.

Her concise, informed advice could verge on cynicism, yet remained helpful and precise. Whether she expressed her own opinion or just repeated some current appreciation, it was always accurate and amusingly put.

"Don't ever expect common sense out of Anna de Noailles," she would say, "she has genius—but no sense of life."

Of Severine, a woman author then enjoying some popularity, "She runs her literary production like a bank account."

Occasionally a curt warning came, "Anne-Marie, don't see too much of Marie X . . . she is harmless only to herself."

Advice could sometimes take a different tone. "Go and visit politicians when they fall out of office, not with the crowd when they come into power. They might remember, be grateful if resurrection comes. Anyhow, it is never a lost gesture."

This list of counsels could be long, for until the beginning of this last war, Hélène Vacaresco considered me as an inexperienced child, the child she had trained, and denied me a right to independent opinions, let alone a stormy life of my own. That my uncle and guardian had saved my fortune I was never allowed to forget. In her eyes I was their ward, whether a startled girl, a happy young bride, or a self-possessed middle-aged woman.

While Hélène was to open my path into her circles, arrangements

were commenced for the more or less serious studies I was to continue practically to the time of my marriage. With tact Mademoiselle Charier selected the different educational opportunities Paris generously offered. With her in constant attendance I ranged from the Père Janvier's sermons to art courses at the Louvre, from private tutors to lectures at the Collège de France.

In the hope of softening the harsh tones of my voice Mademoiselle Madeleine Roch of the Comédie Française was asked to come and teach me elocution. Her stentorian voice did little for mine, but her intense vitality and highly developed dramatic sense turned her lessons into theatrical performances restricted to my private benefit. Draping herself in any shawl or scarf at hand she would in turn become each of Racine's or Corneille's heroines, declaiming long tirades and tragically living the parts until she fell exhausted on the couch. I adored these acts—and learned nothing.

Later a philosophical craze overran Paris, and Bergson's scholarly courses suddenly came into fashion, like a tempting hat to be possessed rather than as an ideological interest. Naturally I partook of the social invasion storming the austere halls of the Collège de France, astonishingly filled with overdressed women who sent their footmen to the previous lecture to reserve their seats in the amphitheater. Serious students sorely resented this frivolous behavior. Once they locked the doors, preventing the desperate ladies from replacing their forlorn lackeys who were thus condemned to an hour of philosophy after having sadly sampled the previous lecture on Sanskrit. Did we really, as we imagined, understand what we were taught, or did Bergson, visibly concerned with his social popularity, descend to our level and deliberately plan his lectures for his feminine social audience? I only know that his philosophy seemed to me shallow when later I dipped back into his work.

Paris, a hotbed of culture and art, carried all the joys of the spirit and senses in its light air. Mine was a marvelous time for eyes just

opening. New art exhibitions, concerts, operas, plays seemed to appear daily. There was never enough time to seize all the opportunities the city offered.

One moment stands out in my memory, the first impact of the pale liquid beauty of Monet's "Nymphs" as I stood gaping in front of these canvasses in the small rooms of the private house of Durand-Ruel. In those days the city swarmed with genius and talent, indigenous or adopted. Van Gogh, Picasso, Utrillo, Modigliani, their names just beginning to emerge into the spotlight, had made France their spiritual home. Paris gave them the air to thrive on, the inspiration they craved, but not, alas, the recognition they deserved nor the material encouragement they needed. The great Degas was to die in lonely poverty. Fame was coming late to Monet.

It was at the posthumous sale of Degas paintings that dealers and amateurs were flabbergasted at the price bid on behalf of a discreet and anonymous foreign buyer who turned out to be a discriminating American collector, Mrs. Havemeyer, who had started his vogue. Art sales were becoming more and more fashionable; everyone seemed to be buying and selling. Jacques Doucet, of fashion fame; Dufayel, the millionaire sponsor of the installment system applied to furniture; Cognacq-Jay, another store magnate; old Chauchard who bequeathed to the Louvre the priceless works of art bought on the fortune he made just opposite in his Grands Magasins du Louvre, were then forming their diversely invaluable collections. All this was a great fillip to dealers and to aristocratic possessors of valuable antiques who were eager to exchange their heirlooms for hard cash.

I had little time as a girl to be assiduous at the Hôtel Drouot but I did go occasionally because of my new hobby for rare books and *fine* bindings. Whatever real knowledge I possess in this field came from a chance encounter one morning with a well-known dealer, Léon Carteret. Supposed to be ill-tempered and impatient with his occasional clients and to overcharge grossly if he disliked the ap-

pearance of the prospective purchaser of some treasured volume, his attitude changed if he detected an eager interest in a customer for anything good or rare in his beloved trade. He could become a helpful coach and guide, and kindly initiated me into the subtle art of the book connoisseur. Had I taken his cunning advice, and more time I could have formed a valuable collection at negligible cost, for finds were available and fairly cheap, and the open-air stands and boxes bordering the railings of the Quai Voltaire held hidden treasures for those lucky and shrewd enough to reach them before the alert tradesmen. Louis Barthou, the politician and famous book collector, told me that those slim precious first editions of Racine's tragedies had been found in the dingy stalls sprawling along the *quai*.

Of contemporary literature I learned little during my educational years in Paris. The authors I was expected to admire or called to meet I found second-rate. The present generation, realizing the greatness of some of the later writers who were then hardly beginning to attract critical attention, may imagine that society was alive to such latent genius. This was rarely the case. Contemporary judgment is only too often fallible; that of my family was painfully mistaken. The genuinely inspired or powerful modern writers were considered too strong meat for me, for the family still exercised some control over my reading.

Things were quite different in regard to the theater, source of inexhaustible pleasure. Here my choice was free. Unperturbed, Mademoiselle Charier would chaperon me to any performance I fancied and, however risqué in conventional views the situations shown on the stage, she never blinked. For this attitude I can find no valid explanation.

The gifted dramatists of the times displayed remarkable technique and facility; few aimed at depth, novel ideas, or psychological studies. Their observations were sound, occasionally subtle, provided one belonged to the class of human beings they specially studied. Of

witty, lighthearted comedy, we had a surfeit. Great human problems such as were found in Strindberg, Ibsen, Pirandello, or even Shaw were rarely tackled in the French theater.

The standards of actors were much higher than those of the authors whose works they interpreted. Some were so great they tower above their time. Sarah Bernhardt, of course, stood unique, supreme, unchallenged. It was my good fortune to see and hear her often, in numerous and varied parts, and the golden sweetness of her voice still rings in my ears after all these decades. From her dignified classical rendering of *Phèdre*, in which her whispered diction in the first act, "*Noble et brillant auteur d'une triste famille*," amazed and delighted audiences and critics, to her lighthearted, buoyant interpretation of Frou-Frou, she was perfect and novel in almost every part.

Dramatic in Sardou's *La Sorcière*, meditative in Rostand's *La Samaritaine*, incredibly glamorous when, in his *l'Aiglon* she impersonated, at the age of sixty, a youth of eighteen, Sarah was inimitable and divine. Whether as Musset's *Lorenzaccio* complete with tights and dagger, Victor Hugo's *Dona Sol*, Scribe's dying *Adrienne Lecouvreur* she was unparalleled. Her deaths were as studied as other women's lives. Had she not visited hospital wards, witnessed last moments of the end of consumptive patients, to add more realism to her *La Dame aux Camélias*?

One, and one alone, in the barren simplicity of her grandeur, could rival Sarah Bernhardt's fame. La Duse's tragically pale, weird appearance, without make-up or visible artifice, was shattering. Her dramatic spareness of gesture, unique vibration of voice, the humane vividness with which she lived her parts were unforgettable and deeply impressive. The realistic expressions and mobility of her features bore witness to the sufferings and passions she had endured. Yet her private life was as voluntarily retiring as Sarah's was spectacular and public. Duse's inspired interpretation of d'Annunzio's dramas, *La Gioconda* and *La Citta Morta*, unintentionally gave away both her great love and her inmost griefs.

These two were stars of international fame. Réjane was French, and purely so, but unrivaled on her own resilient ground. Her very figure, features, the carriage of her upright head bore the stamp of Paris. Those deep-sunk, dark-rimmed, expressive eyes, contrasting with the short, turned-up nose, ready to inhale the big town's odors of passion or vice, the thin, curved lips, equally apt to express sentiment or scorn, were altogether typically Parisian. Réjane, child of the gutter, expertly chose her clothes to accompany her deft movements, in turn languid or curt. Her restrained, slightly hoarse voice could, in subtle inflexions, convey all the emotions, delicate feelings, or violence of her spoken word, emphasizing the versatility of her multi-fold talent. She lived for, and practically died on, the stage. What greater compliment could one bestow on an actress?

Now opera, too, entered my life. Opera, born in Italy, genuine in Germanic countries, is, in France, a superimposed, not even acquired, taste. Comic opera, or operetta, is all her native talent develops. I therefore preferred foreign companies on tour to the indifferent grand opera routine. And so, not only to me but to all of Paris, the Russian opera came with terrific impact. It came, too, as a complete surprise. The name of Diaghilev was unknown; Moussorgsky known only to musicians. For the ordinary public the first performance of *Boris Godounov*, with Chaliapin and Smirnov, was a revelation of a new world of sound, color, and art.

We were in the south of France when Granny received an imperative wire from an informed friend. I must return at once. A Russian opera, with the St. Petersburg cast and sets, was to be performed at the Grand Opéra. My next recollection is sitting, with Charier, in the red-velvet-lined presidential box almost falling over the gilt rail, frantically applauding, practically screaming with excitement. The opening scene, suggesting in its procession and setting the glamour of Orthodox religious ceremonies, so familiar to me, was startling to Parisian eyes. Carefully regulated movements of the crowd created an illusion of casual ease; the chanting of the chorus was perfect.

Vivid patches of bright red, yellow, and orange, with touches of violent blues and purples, achieved harmony through the very contrast of pure tones. The beauty of the music, and the rich splendor of the costumes added to our amazement at discovering this barbaric yet refined art. The voices were marvelous, Chaliapin staggering in the majesty and pathos of his acting.

Public and critics were unanimous in their surprise and praise. So one could still create new patterns on the tired canvas of operatic staging! International success led daring Diaghilev to plan a series of marvels for the following season—transplanting from Russia a complete corps de ballet. It was a bold experiment followed with suspense. Of recent years the French art of the ballet had faded in its native country. What would be the reception of this new version of an old form?

Names like Diaghilev, Astruc, Fokine, Bakst, were on every lip weeks ahead of the date (May 18, 1909) fixed for the opening of the Russian ballet season. The Théâtre du Châtelet had been selected because of its vast size. Seats and boxes were sold out long before the first night. Fanatics offered a thousand francs, then worth two hundred dollars, for a stall, and often failed to get one. On the opening night the frantic cheers, amazed enthusiasm, hordes of overdressed society people invading the stage, the shouts of admiration, showed that the success was beyond description. In contrast came furious whistling from a small minority of objectors, freely exerting their Parisian right to differ.

The second performance, which I attended, gave me a good idea of what that momentous evening had been. The Russian ballet boom had started—to last for weeks, months, years. To some this ballet craze may appear futile or mad. But to us in the Paris of this century's first decade it somehow changed the face of the planet. Each theatergoer had the soul of Columbus; he had, on his own, discovered a new world.

Mathematical precision, imbued with Chopin's grace, presided over

the elfin flight of *Les Sylphides*. Pavlova, their queen, hardly displaced the surrounding air by the lightness of her *pointes*, seemingly effortless in their acrobatic accuracy. *Lac des Cygnes* brought us her almost unreal birdlike grace that so perfectly matched the music of Tchaikovsky. A swan again, she died in beauty in Saint-Saëns's *Rhapsodie*. Pavlova's slight ethereal, melting figure and mobile, albeit not beautiful, features could express any emotion or mood she chose. She was enchanting and unique; a dancing comet in Diaghilev's galaxy, she spread a trail of light across his first seasons.

Tamar Karsavina was more tangible; the glittering sparkle of *L'Oiseau de Feu* her triumph. Her flashing dark beauty, the harsh precision of her steps, clear-cut like a diamond tracing on fine glass, the shapely grace of her body, the sensuous quiver of her blood-tinged mouth made her shine like a precious gem.

Apart from the exceptional Vestris, the male dancer in choreographic tradition was the mere partner and support of the prima ballerina. With unheard-of *élévation*, the whole length of the stage crossed in one supple, resilient bound, Vaslav Nijinsky effected a revolution of his own. Unchallenged master of the boards, none could excel him. That puckish Slav, semi-Asiatic face, with slanting eyes, high protruding cheekbones, wide, open nostrils breathing the very spirit of the dance, all made for a most impressive stage appearance; his overflowing vitality and strength, the airiness of his leaps, the perfection of every movement revealed his inspired, youthful genius.

The ballet craze lasted until the beginning of the 1914 war. Then its heroic days faded with Nijinsky's waning consciousness and Pavlova's turning to private enterprise. The Russian Revolution deprived these children of her soil of their contact with an established and marvelous tradition. The loss of Diaghilev's vitality and intuition was irreparable. But those early days of the Russian ballet had helped pave the way for much novelty to come that was rare and modern in music and art, and for a lasting future of fantasy and creation.

With the multitude of fascinating new worlds opening before

me it is not surprising that I knew little of the politics of the day. I was hardly aware of the continuous changes of government in France; of the lack of personality required for one to be elected president of the republic; nor that ministers were interchangeable and transient, often colorless pawns in the power of minor political interests, who disappeared without valid reason and reentered the stage without urgency. In the circles in which I moved it was fashionable to ignore or despise the mob in office and Hélène Vacaresco's realization that there were some able men in the political personnel of the Third Republic and freely mixing with them was considered daring. Even going near the Palais de l'Élysée, the President's handsome residence, was simply not done; his household was sneered at; his receptions attended by officials only; the beautiful horses and carriages of the republic might be admired, not acknowledged.

The ranks that had so long governed France, had given her her great leaders, were completely abrogating their powers and duties. With rare exceptions the sons of the aristocracy were content with their clubs and shooting, perhaps a little racing. A career in the army was the only one fit to harbor with elegance this pedigree stock, although a few deigned to enter diplomacy. Slowly but surely French aristocracy was losing influence and prestige; its money was already gone; its titles were for sale to wealthy heiresses.

The traditional *haute bourgeoisie* remained equally aloof from politics and was equally uppish in its own way. These people felt they could walk on a par with the best of birth and considered themselves above title. I once heard a descendant of a professional family, renowned since the fifteenth century, say to a very high ranking lady of Imperial title but recent lineage, "As to birth, you have nothing to boast about in comparison with my five centuries of rotters."

The wealthy Jewish set made no attempt to wield political power but coveted social success. Fastidious, coarse, or subtle, conceited yet unassuming in spite of great wealth and taste, they were content with their financial achievements, receptions, and magnificent collections.

The odious race of loud nouveaux riches, vain and vulgar, was a post-war invention that my youth was spared.

Admittedly there had been examples when the nobility had meddled disastrously. The Dowager Duchess d'Uzes had lavished many of the family millions—to the extent of having to sell her superb eighteenth-century house on the Champs Élysées—on the lost cause of General Boulanger! That she had mistaken the General's intentions and believed he aimed at royalist restoration was small excuse for her major error. In my day, the old lady was still considered the best woman to hounds in the whole breadth of France, maintaining the high standards of French traditional *vénérerie*. This achievement apparently sufficed to calm aristocratic qualms as to her former political activity.

Of a totally different type in her dignified correctness was the old Duchess de Noailles. Whether in her historic yet barrackslike Château de Champlatreux or her Paris house, she invariably received stiffly seated on a high straight armchair from which she never rose to greet guests, whatever their rank or age, merely bowing politely to women, hardly nodding to men. Shaking hands was to her an unknown gesture branded as a familiarity. Hence one can imagine her bewilderment when her youngest son (the older boys had, of course, married Duke's daughters) announced his intention to marry that puckish poetical genius, Anna de Brancovan. Though this little, wide-eyed beauty might bear an exotic princely title, she was, nevertheless, a foreigner, worse, a writer, and dared openly to profess socialist theories such as had never been heard in the Noailles family. But the pair was stubborn; the marriage took place; the young countess brought glamour combined with some literary scandal to an illustrious name.

The poetry of Anna de Noailles may undergo passing eclipse, yet I believe it will in time revive and endure. Her work is too dated for fashion, too recent for posterity's recognition. I have so much enjoyed both her personality and her poems that I cannot conceive of

their lasting oblivion. Her speech had an unmatched sparkling quality. Of charming and harmonious timbre, her voice filled the room with the most luminous cascade of verbal fireworks I have ever heard. This dazzling brilliance was accompanied by feline gestures from her long slender hands and the flashing of her large, elongated eyes, shadowed by thick curved lashes fringing the heavy eyelids. Her favorite position was reclining, her whole vitality condensed in her mobile face and subtle hands. Spellbound, her audience listened.

Her appearances in the *salons* of Paris were rare, unpunctual, and tinged with caprice. Hers was not the gift nor the desire for regular entertaining; she shirked such discipline and planning. But when she attended the success of any function was assured. She was among the younger women of the noble Faubourg Saint-Germain who led the first bold incursions into more intellectual and bohemian spheres than their own. It was only in these years that aristocracy half opened its doors to the intelligentsia and the arts, or that the varied coteries, social, theatrical, literary, artistic, until now neatly delimited, began to mingle, under careful guidance in the *salon* of some broadminded hostesses.

The art of choosing, grouping, and handling the elements of a genuine *salon* is specifically French, and on no other soil can it equally well flourish and endure. When, in the seventeenth century, the Marquise de Rambouillet *donnait à causer*, she created a precedent which, enhanced by intense social and court life, survived up to the Revolution. Evading the perils of the Emigration and coarser mores of the Napoleonic period, the *salon* triumphantly reappeared during the last century and still bloomed at the beginning of the present one. Cultivated with care and tact by French womanhood, this national institution now thrived on a renewed, more gregarious, lease of vitality, and a fair number of well-established *salons* studded Paris's social map. Earlier customs had been altered, and there were now larger audiences, more food, a severe ban on card tables, and a strict main-

tenance of high conversational standards, but the fundamentals of the institution remained.

No precise rules can be set for the creation of such an abode of good talk and quick wit, yet some intrinsic essentials persist. Steadiness of purpose, discrimination, and tact are required, a dash of ruthlessness, too, plus the choice of at least one day a week when friends are sure to find the hostess firmly anchored by her fireside, flanked, if possible, by some permanent male attraction of sufficient fame to bring glamour to the gathering and ensure the assiduous attendance of other prominent visitors. In many a case the hostess herself acted as the desired magnet. The basis safely set, intelligence, patience, and good pruning may suffice to train and foster the budding *salon* which will occasionally bring world-wide recognition to its skillful sponsor. Here is a case of talent, not hard cash. Even where money freely flows it cannot create a *salon*, merely a crowd.

These principles Hélène Vacaresco had, after a period of careful observation, applied to the creation of her own successful *salon*, presided over by her immensely wise and fat mother, my aunt Euphrosine. Seated like an observing old owl in a large armchair in a corner of the gloomy yet well-furnished drawing room, she carefully appraised her daughter's miscellaneous friends, later to make pronouncements like an oracle. Of course I had at first no friends of my own age in Paris; later I found almost all those I met too silly and superficial to attract me. My elders had always interested me more than my contemporaries; unnoticed, I had long been accustomed to observing and pondering. It was only natural that Hélène should take me under her wing even at this early age and that I should find myself not only among her guests but accompanying her on some of her visits. Evening parties I was not allowed to attend, but the *salon* hour was always between five and eight. So, in short skirts and my hair still down my back, I would occasionally go with Hélène to watch unobtrusively the crowd of mixed guests or gaze at some literary high

light. I can still see myself on a Sunday afternoon in spring, wearing my blue-trimmed beige frock, my too large hat dripping with cornflowers, beside Hélène's more vivid array, a bright red patch of frills covering her large bosom as we made our way up the Avenue Hoche, ablaze with chestnuts, to number 33, the Caillavet Hôtel.

Of the "star-centered" type no one could forget the Caillavet *salon*, almost an institution, ministered with untiring zeal by its imperious owner, to the sole glory of her admired, adored, bullied lover, Anatole France. There he stood, under Madame Arman de Caillavet's watchful eye, complete with cap and minute, shrunken gestures, leaning against the mantelpiece, that solid foundation of any French reception, haranguing a variegated, respectful gathering of devotees. I was naturally too young to claim attention. But should any minor entity have obtained more than the Master's absent-minded greeting or elusive handshake, Madame would have been quick in warding her off, prompting her idol to dispatch rapid bows and compliments and to commence again his renowned conversation. This was in reality nothing but a lengthy soliloquy, vigilantly directed by his busybody of a mistress. He made her name and reputation, as she tended his glory, until one day, tired of her bossing, he abandoned her for Emma, his maid.

Literature did not, however, foresake the house. Madame de Caillavet's son, Gaston, in collaboration with Robert de Flers, conquered the boulevard theaters with irresistibly funny plays that were running full steam during my youth and are still revived on both stage and screen. His widow described the glories of her mother-in-law's *salon* in a lively book, and their daughter Simone is now married to André Maurois.

The purely literary type of *salon* was, I suppose, headed by that of Madame Alphonse Daudet, the kind, elderly widow of the popular novelist and somewhat of an author herself, as were also her two sons. The elder, Léon, enormously fat (the family dining table had to be scooped out to house his protruding belly and reduce the dis-

tance between his greedy eyes and his all important food) was sometimes amusing and always the noisy defender of "the Throne and the Altar" in his innumerable books. The younger brother, Lucien, slim, good-looking, slightly effete, pleased me much more than his conspicuous brother. Although he could write with grace and charm, he ceased after a few happy attempts. "Too much printed matter in the family," was his smiling excuse. The Daudet house, small, old and quaint, was always filled with the best brains in town.

Of minor intellectual value but more aristocratic glitter, with benevolence allied to a complete lack of discrimination, were the large, semiliterary receptions held by the Duchess de Rohan in the huge ancestral *hôtel* that was stacked with period furniture and ancient tradition. *Roi ne puis, Prince ne daigne, Rohan suis*, ran their haughty slogan. In spite of her general appearance of an amiable washerwoman, the elderly Duchess was a great lady, warmhearted and hospitable. Her versifyings, however, were a grievous mistake nothing could induce her to give up. The mixed bag of guests she entertained was a somewhat shattering sight.

"I believe my wife picks them up in the bus," the fiery little Duke used to say in mingled apology and amazement while watching the disparate collection of people invading his stately residence. Curious and amused, rank and quality, who loved and respected the Duchess, flocked in their thousands to her parties, never knowing whom or what would be found there.

Flitting at ease among the miscellaneous groups, her slim little figure, untidy appearance, and whimsical smile revealing her irony and good temper, the second daughter of the house, Princess Lucien Murat—better known as Marie Murat and now Countess Charles de Chambrun—helped manage the mass of uncoordinated friends. She never appeared at a loss, had the right word for each, and her laughter echoed amidst the ancient walls unaccustomed to such lively manners. Marie fitted in everywhere, adapted herself to any surroundings, never appeared out of place, whether in the lowest bohemia

or as the perfect ambassadress faultlessly fulfilling her diplomatic duties. A credit to her hosts, a continuous joy and surprise to her friends, she was a latent threat to all women, for her admirers were legion. Small, thin, dark, she combined in her vivid personality attraction, wit, gaiety, culture, a gift for delicate friendship, and a clever mind, all amply compensating for the discord of her looks and clothes.

Extremely fond of her, my aunt Vacaresco once affectionately chided her. "Really, Marie, you ought to be a little tidier, better groomed. You are supposed to dress so as to attract and please men."

"*Voyons*, Madame, don't be childish. One does not dress to please men. One undresses for them."

No alternative remained but laughter.

With ideas in advance of her time and her class the Duchess of Clermont-Tonnerre pictured herself very modern, devoid of prejudice, more revolutionary than she really was, but willing to accept and admire all artistic and literary experiments. In her attractive house might be found a few chosen advocates of the newest activities, authors, artists, clever men in all walks of life. To her credit must be put her early admiration and attachment to Marcel Proust, her sure literary taste and judgment, happily expressed, and the courage of her opinions whatever the contemporary verdict may have been. Fair and pastel-colored, a Raeburn rather than a Fragonard, her appearance almost justified inclusion in the cohorts of the period's notorious social beauties.

Of these famous beauties whom society boasted, many were not in their prime, but all were cleverly groomed and supremely elegant. Somehow the old stock never seemed to die out, the younger generation was smart, lovely too, more streamlined and standardized, yet could not always rival the perfect features and deportment of its elders. Describing physical beauty is an ungrateful task; new terms ought to be coined to depict the varying value of individual loveliness. As one example of the *grandes dames* of my youth I must how-

ever mention the Countess Greffulhe. When I met her she must have touched her fifties, quite an age before our generation changed the mileage of years, but the delicate features, the tiny head born proudly upon a slender neck, the soft gaze of her hazel eyes, the slightly turned-up eighteenth-century nose, finely shaped lips, flawless complexion, the elongated body and harmony of her movements, all spelled a beauty that would endure. To this she added the best that Parisian taste and skill could devise. She was the embodiment of loveliness and breeding. Her conduct was above suspicion, a rarity in one so beautiful, worldly, and admired. Hailed by her set as the prototype of French aristocratic elegance, her invitations were much coveted, but her house never became a center of intelligence or the arts. The luxurious background of this millionaire's wife seemed as typically conventional as the mind of its beautiful owner, whose mental gifts I never detected.

More real grandeur was to be found throughout the old aristocratic Faubourg Saint-Germain. Here ancient left-bank *hôtels*, hidden behind the tall walls encircling their paved courtyards, with deep gardens extending beyond their magnificently secluded back façades, were planned on proud, expansive lines. The entire ground floor, built around the spacious main entrance hall, would be dedicated to entertaining. Suites of drawing rooms extended over the whole length of the house; different-sized dining rooms and the all-important library showed superb proportions and décor. But in the display of furniture and *objects d'art* I was repeatedly impressed by the lack of individuality, or personality. This lack of human touch gave those grand Paris *hôtels* a peculiar, unmistakable flavor of arrested life. The faded tones of the damask or tapestry hangings curtaining the large windows or decorating the ornate walls; the carved walnut paneling; the color schemes, style, and upholstery of the antique chairs and settees, and the manner in which the furniture was arranged along the walls; the gray or yellowish patina of the carved marble mantelpiece; even the place and height at which the family portraits, be

they by some anonymous artist, a Nattier, or a Philippe de Champagne, were hung—everything was expected and stereotyped. The only differences would lie in the quality and value of the family heirlooms or the shapes and sizes of the rooms. This tallied with the conservative mentality of their owners. Outliving their times, these houses had the calm majesty of Bossuet's prose.

In the new residential quarters the more recent mansions seemed planned around a large staircase, the main architectural feature of the whole building. On these staircases the life and the glamour of their owners' parties were centered. Entertainments and balls took place on the first floor, and from the wide landing of the stairs each new arrival was carefully watched. Gracefully ascending or descending these marble steps became a studied art with every stylish beauty. Even an indifferent guest could not but be aware that any prestige gained in the ballroom might be irretrievably destroyed by an unlucky stumble marring a spectacular entrance. Young girls practiced their staircase effects as Mistinguette must have tackled the problem at the beginning of her career at the Folies Bergère. Overhearing whispered comments was bloodcurdling. A happy and successful ascension could determine one's reputation for life.

Critical stair gazers could have been happily dispensed with by fastidious females and harassed debutantes, whose dreary ranks I had not yet joined. It was enough for them to contend with the complicated clothes that fashion then decreed. Frilled, full-bosomed bodices topped trailing skirts that fitted tightly over the hips, fettered the knees, then suddenly flared into a galaxy of flounces covering large areas of polished parquet floor. In addition, one must keep in mind the management of bag, fan, flimsy tulles fluttering around naked shoulders, and maybe a tiara to keep steady on reluctant locks. It could not have been for pleasure that the smartest of these women, well-trained to live under the public eye, wore those high, boned net collars studded with precious brooches or concealed by a stiff diamond *collier de chien*. Bunches of curls towered on their heads,

requiring many a long ruby or emerald-mounted pin to fix securely the large hat, tilted to one side and trimmed with a flight of birds of paradise so fastened as to sway freely in the slightest breeze. In winter, velvety felts and bulky fur toques were easier to keep on one's head. Daytime frocks were ankle long, a recent concession to women's "conquest of independence," whatever that may have meant. In fact, these *entrave* skirts were so tight that, with their straps and sashes tied below the knees, they prohibited any free movement. No, then, as now, it was fashion the arbiter that decreed upon us the acute discomforts of our costumes.

To portray adequately and expensively these adorned graces (mascara and rouge had only recently been triumphantly revived) society's vogue turned to foreign artists in preference to the genuine greatness of native painters. Perhaps no French artist was willing to undertake the task. Boldini, of the protruding eyes, pumpkin-shaped head, ceaselessly rapid movements, and fascinating quick speech, was the wizard master of society portraiture. Something modernly Italian, evocative of twisted macaroni, appeared in his skillfully drafted portraits, brushed with vividly distinctive *brio*. To his light touch, bright color, and flattering likenesses he owed immense popularity, in spite of his reputation for preferring his radiant sitters to pay in nature rather than cash.

Though no other painter equaled Boldini's popularity in widespread circles, La Gandara, addicted to browns and ochres, who believed he emulated El Greco but only achieved decadent mannerism; Zuloaga, who was at one time the rage; Laszlo, superficial and glazed, yet perhaps the quasi-official chromoportraitist of royalty, quality, and finance; and Jacques Blanche, caustic and fastidious, almost the only French artist to do portraits at the time—each had his adherents. Even then their work seemed to me of only passing esthetic value.

There was so much of both immediate and enduring interest in those first years in Paris that it is little wonder I continued to feel older than my years. As the months passed my activities gradually

grew more adult. My attitude to life was determined: I could continue to complete my education along with more mundane occupations, but only one possible future lay ahead of me. Marriage alone would bring a solution to my home problems, greater independence, and, perhaps, happiness. I felt myself ripe for matrimony, and, with some distaste, my thoughtful Granny agreed.

Marriage Market

AN international heiress was being thrown onto the marriage market, a market as busy in its way as the stock exchange and with an equally keen sense of mercantile values. How many surprising experiences I owed to that unofficial Continental matchmaking institution, which included penniless dowagers hoping to cash in on a match, scheming middle-aged women in search of an heiress for their discarded or all too expensive lovers, and shrewd Catholic priests. At times even political scheming was involved.

There was no lack of well-born and well-bred, high ranking, handsome, and eligible but impecunious young men, and to many of them I probably appeared an adequate opportunity. In fact, for about two years, a large pack of the most eligible fortune hunters was set on my trail. *Redorer son blason* [regilding one's crest], as it is politely put in French aristocratic circles, was quite the fashion in those days, and the fairly high-grade article in demand not always easily available. In my case the goods were practically brought to their doorsteps.

I possessed, on paper so to speak, almost all the required qualifications as an object of the chase. Very young, of excellent birth; despite a faulty pedigree on my mother's side, with my own private fortune already well in hand, which eliminated the painful necessity of waiting for my parents' disappearance to inherit their money; my international education was also an asset. I was physically acceptable but

actually far from good-looking. This made a worth-while combination. European girls of pure lineage were rarely very rich. The American girls who possessed legendary wealth and adequate position were by this time becoming aware of that Continental character, the *coureur de dot*, and his chase after money. It was dawning on them that many of the brilliant marriage arrangements with European nobles were usually part of a mere racket.

The outcome of many an American-European match had been grievous. Marquis Boni de Castellane's marriage to Anna Gould had ended in a major public scandal, involving not only his quasi-successful attempt at squandering her vast fortune, but also unpardonable indiscretions with conspicuous mistresses, and finally, on the occasion of some elegant social wedding, a fight on the steps of the Madeleine Church between the miniature Marquis, complete with sable-lined coat, gold-handled cane, and finely ruffled shirt, and his more virile cousin Prince Helie de Talleyrand-Sagan. The little husband was knocked out. His hardly more reputable kinsman ran away with the American-born wife, after a resounding divorce that was never acknowledged by the church.

The union of Clara Ward [Clara Soleil, as she was called] with Prince de Chimay had been another sensational failure. Her elopement with a *tzigane* fiddler whom she worshipped, on whom she lavished love and jewels, and whom she actually married, had provided material for widespread gossip. Other sensational matches had worked out hardly better. There may have been faults on both sides, but the fundamental trouble was that root of all evil—money, money, money, as the husband's sole aim. As a result, American heiresses became more careful.

I may not have immediately realized what was going on around me, but I soon awoke to the painful reality. I perceived that each new party or well-engineered chance meeting concealed but another aspect of this unwritten law of exchange, based on supply and demand. All this marriage talk and traffic struck me as pointless and vile. Quickly,

however, my sense of humor, or maybe my natural cynicism, got the better of my squeamishness. Once I found out that Granny was on my side and at heart against the venal matchmaking, it amused me to invent ways of embarrassing my insincere admirers.

"All women are procuresses," Granny once said sharply, "and when they picture themselves honest they arrange marriages."

In spite of these opinions she dared not go against the accepted rule: a girl of a certain standing had to go through these distasteful ordeals, and she did not find it in her to deprive me of my chances, if any, to choose the winning number among a brilliant collection of names and titles. Whether I approved of her viewpoint is another matter, but at least I enjoyed, on my own, many a silent laugh as I watched the fruitless efforts of some unlucky young man—obviously indifferent to me as a human being—trying to please or attract me, while I played back as hard as I could, only to decline at the last moment. Ruthlessly I met them on their own ground, earning my freedom to marry the right man—who, eventually, appeared. This too was somehow, an arranged match, but it led to love, to some of the strongest emotions I ever experienced, and to the happiness I was seeking.

Undoubtedly this marriage fair provided thorough training for a woman, but it was slightly nerve-racking for a girl of sixteen. Today, I judge the system definitely wrong; certainly it was not designed to bring fresh ideals to an already disillusioned child. What unasked-for experience and the behavior of the men in my family had begun, my interested wooers completed, depriving me of any faith in mankind and burdening me for life with one of the worst inferiority complexes one could imagine.

On the eve of my sixteenth birthday I had already taken stock of myself. I was too short, very dark, with thick black-blue tresses impossible to maintain neatly piled up on the top of my head; no figure whatsoever, actually much too plump by today's standards; with wide-open rather beautiful eyes almost devoid of eyebrows. My small,

well-shaped head, good bone structure, regular features in an oval face, amounted to no beauty, not even "looks." I had a poor complexion, and no trace of chic. Thus, very consciously, I saw myself, and I cherished no vain illusions. I always lacked confidence in my appearance and was painfully self-conscious.

By 1908 our usual haunts, Paris, Vienna, Rome, Geneva, my own country, and perhaps a few neighboring ones, became aware of my existence as an available bride. My family had relatives and connections spread all over Europe but did not assiduously cultivate them. Our winters we spent in that gossipy corner of cosmopolis, the South of France, where, after I once appeared, reluctantly, with Granny in the Russian church at Cannes, wearing a long frock, my hair dressed high in grown-up fashion, the word instantly went around, "The Vacaresco girl, Anne-Marie, has come out." This was inaccurate. I never actually came out previous to my marriage at eighteen. Still the word went around. I was out. . . .

In their Paris homes my grandmother's old friends immediately busied themselves: pencils were produced; ages and probable income discussed; looks and attractions were pondered. Immediate and precise information must be gathered, and the best sources to obtain it were carefully investigated. Subsequent steps were quickly taken. The Roumanian Legation in Paris (the minister was a cousin of ours) was approached and questioned for accurate data. Letters crossed to and fro between western and eastern Europe. In one particular case I know a special emissary made a trip to Bucharest solely to gather full details about my estates, financial position, freedom of commitments. Granny bore the brunt of the assaults, smilingly informing me of the letters and the scheming visits she received. Mademoiselle Charier warned us that she had been discreetly promised a handsome reward if she helped to marry me off to some shady candidate. My maid was tentatively bribed to hand me letters. More imaginative young men faked surprise meetings, pretending to fall in love with me at first sight at some skating rink or hunting party.

Nowadays, and in Anglo-Saxon countries, such tales must sound preposterous and exaggerated. To absolve myself I can only appeal to the memory of French women belonging to my generation who went through the same ordeal.

The list of the so-called "pretenders" to my hand, if I remember correctly, comprised well over twenty names, but the majority of these quests make singularly drab stories not deserving mention. Those of my compatriots who entered the competition were by far the nicest, most sincere of the lot. Without being boy friends—of this at the time there could be no question—they at least gave me the illusion of having some genuine attachment for me, and with all of them comradeship continued during our married lives. They all ultimately acquired charming though not particularly rich wives, and at least two of them married into my family.

Such was witty, agreeable, exquisitely musical Alexis Catargi, who often stayed with us at Maneshti and spent whole evenings playing my favorite tunes on the piano. A delightful performer, well-trained in Vienna, he had continued his education in England to become an accomplished diplomat. He was a charmer and a rogue, whose chief weaknesses were dope and gambling. He also had very bad health. All this I knew—we were quite outspoken with one another—and never dreamed of linking my life with his, yet he it was who brought me nearest to Granny's wrath and drew upon my head pathetic homilies from the entire family.

It all came from a breach of etiquette we committed in the country. One day the post was late and I was expecting an important letter. I suggested to Alexis we might drive to the post office, eight miles distant, and collect my mail. He agreed. We got the horse harnessed, the dogcart ready, and off we went in the hazy atmosphere of a lovely September day. We forgot to warn the "powers-that-be." The road was long and dusty, the weather warm, and the horse weary. Eagerly talking, we forgot the flight of time. We reached home late, too late to change for dinner, and having missed at least one course.

From the gates we could see through blazing open windows the family assembled for the evening meal. But Granny was missing. I found her in her room in a fit of anguish and despair, almost weeping, convinced I had forever eloped. Tragic reproaches followed. This upheaval compelled me reluctantly to give up a mild flirtation with a man whose company gave me great pleasure but whom I had no intention of marrying.

Alexis married my cousin, Micaella Ghika, and made her blissfully happy yet at times terribly anxious. The two of them were intimate friends of my husband and myself; our children were born almost simultaneously; they grew up together; and Micaella mothered my wild little daughter better than I ever could. Eventually death, and life too, separated us; and "Mic" remains somewhere behind the Iron Curtain.

The old trick of flirting with one's cousins, the only males within reach of our narrow circle, none of us escaped. Though I had no boy first cousins there was quite a number who were once or twice removed. Almost all proposed or made their intentions clear, some in full honesty and affection, others just for fun, I suppose. I declined, more or less sweetly according to the degree of sincerity with which I credited them. One, a bore, I warded off by telling him I knew he was keeping a mistress and had a child by another, and that I did not fancy myself playing third fiddle. Granny pretended to be shocked by my indecent allegations, but at heart was highly relieved.

Another, too insistent, I completely disgusted by dragging him into our Maneshti orchard under challenge that he could not eat as many plums as I could. They were unripe and most indigestible, but I knew they would not harm my hardened stomach. They made him so sick he got extremely cross, left the house, and gave me up as a very bad joke. He got over it in time, and when both of us were married we farmed, in harmony, adjoining estates.

The international marriage market was much more businesslike. It was pursued on broad comprehensive lines, which excluded sen-

timementality or romance. Based on good bookkeeping and a shrewd knowledge of exchange values, it called for abnegation of all personal feelings on the part of those prepared to accept its verdict. To come out of it safe required great skill and independence.

At the turn of the century there were reputedly numerous women in Parisian society who readily played the part of intermediaries in the marriage market. But only two, of different styles and origins, crossed my path. As a common denominator they both bore aristocratic French names and had their headquarters in Paris, that crossroads of the world. In countries where marriage is a matter of free choice their methods, peculiar to the time and place, will seem strange. In France they were an integral part of a vanished social order.

One was Caroline de Bonteville, a paragon of pure Faubourg Saint-Germain, the best born, most conservative section of French nobility. Descended from an old titled family of Brittany, that last bastion of "the Throne and the Altar," this tall, stiff, immensely aged maiden lady of means never married because she had been unable to find a match to suit her high ambitions. In truth, only a noble and impeccable member of the *ancien régime* could have satisfied her. The nobility of the Empire she scorned. It was even rumored that in her youth Napoleon III, attracted by her looks and position, attempting to propose, was met with the insolent retort, "How dare you, Usurper."

Presumably regretting the opportunities she had missed, she busied her energetic old age with the hobby of matchmaking. Her shrunken English secretary-companion, aged and deaf, afflicted with a continuous tremble, but lively and alert in conversation, had to spend long hours drafting interminable lists of eligible girls and available bachelors, preferably of international standing. Opposite each name financial and social position were carefully noted, with occasionally a few more private particulars. By means of this precious document an infinite variety of combinations could be envisaged and perhaps eventually brought to happy matrimonial endings.

Mademoiselle de Bonteville's spacious Victorian apartment proved an appropriate setting for her large parties, variously planned, decidedly stuck-up, and steadily boring. Her Tuesday at-homes were riddled with anxious mothers eager to market their goods in the shape of shy, poorly groomed, convent-educated debutantes, dressed in the dowdy tradition of their set. Here one also met elderly titled gentlemen clad in out-of-date garb who voiced antiquated royalist opinions. The young men were relatively few, rather second-rate, and obviously eager to marry heiresses. The really desirable matches usually kept aloof, and had to be cunningly trapped, except in special and worthwhile cases.

The vitally important interviews, involving rank, fortune, and position, were elaborate, carefully devised affairs to allow the maximum possibility of attraction and success. I went through several of them myself. Given the slightest sense of humor, they were both entertaining and conducive to melancholy. The French, naturally witty and sarcastic, seemed completely blind to this type of irony. The basic qualities duly ascertained, the plan of attack was drawn up. When French girls were concerned, the male usually proved to be the conquered fortress, the young ladies being more than equal to their role as burnt offerings on the matrimonial altar. This, I thought, justified Alphonse Karr's aphorism: *Les femmes devraient toutes se marier; les hommes jamais*. [All women ought to marry; men never.]

Should the young lady happen to possess looks and a limited brain, the Opéra might prove a suitable meeting ground. For this purpose Mademoiselle de Bonteville subscribed to a huge box on fashionable Monday nights. One could be silent and show off, put in a knowing word if musically inclined, at worst make a graceful exit with the excuse of duty—social duty naturally, such as the compulsion of appearing at one or several of the balls running in their dozen during the season. In that glamorous gold and crimson box, on a summer evening, I met the Duke of L.M., an intelligent young man, as reluctant as myself to engage his future on so flimsy a pretext. Our

wits had been given too little credit. In a glance, and three minutes of half-veiled allusions, we had cleared the air, allowing ourselves to enjoy lightheartedly an excellent performance of Gounod's *Faust* with Geraldine Farrar, a new and delightful American prima donna, taking with bravado, and with long black tresses hanging to her knees, the part of Goethe's blond Gretchen. Amused remarks during the opera and supper were all I ever shared with the Duke, who soon married wealth and beauty and created for himself a stormy conjugal life.

If, on the other hand, the girl's brains were suspected to exceed her looks—together a bad omen, wits being liable to develop into independent opinions—a lunch or a dinner party might be arranged. In my case it was a dinner party.

Dinner at seven was long, dull, and dressy. Etiquette reigned, sweet champagne flowed, and the best food France could provide, which is saying a great deal, was served. We inadvertently arrived three minutes late to find a formidable row of museum pieces already lined up like mummies awaiting us, wigs blazing with jewels, their diamond and emerald heirlooms flashing, their lorgnettes mercilessly aimed at me without any decent attempt to conceal unbounded curiosity. Skins were slack and tired; the worn and faded brocade frocks bore an 1880 look; the settings of the jewelry were old-fashioned and grubby; but the eyes were bright with the anticipation of minutely inspecting and probably tearing to pieces the newcomer, that little foreigner Caroline had cunningly discovered. These people represented a restricted inner sanctum into which my penetration was due solely to Granny's schoolday friendship with our hostess.

The male guests struck me as a batch of retired military or naval men, uneasy in civilian clothes or evening dress of antiquated type with tails too long and stiff, clumsy shirts bulging above the sorry black waistcoats which were then still worn. An ungainly lot of fossils, lacking even the redemption of wit. My two young suitors cut no striking figure among this weird collection of sacred monsters.

Seated beside me the young Marquis of C., of exalted pedigree and provincial outlook, talked of nothing but horses, dogs, and the Church. Books and pictures did not enter the range of his interests; he had never traveled; and I felt sure he could but shrink at the thought of facing his respectably dumb parents, modestly living in their distant historic château, with a bride such as I. A little lower at the silver-laden table sat a naïve, pimply youth of minor title, doing his best to please, but visibly unaware of the trial he was letting himself in for later.

The experiment failed and, to my great satisfaction, was never renewed. But taking everything into account, the experience was worth my while. This and similar parties gave me a good insight of the most conventional and highly principled section of French aristocracy.

Quite different was the other marriage *salon*. In full swing in my girlish days, and destined to survive for many a year, it was still going strong during the 1919 Peace Conference. Run by the American-born Marquise de Talleyrand, née Curtis, divorced wife of the since Duke de Dino, it catered to a circle of widely cosmopolitan friends, modish, and largely belonging to the so-called "*Tout Paris*." Here the hostess, alert, talkative, endowed with scanty means but a marvelous sense of organization and ability at intrigue, made the best of her business capacities.

Although over sixty, she was anything but stuffy, and the mixture of people in her *salon* was entertaining in a moderately snobbish manner. Her family connections spread all over Europe and the United States and were so intricate it required a good memory or a couple of reference books to keep pace with the network of cousins and relations who appeared at intervals in her flat. This was located on the Avenue Bosquet, in view of the Eiffel Tower, which spreads its spidery shadow on a quarter of Paris that I most dislike as it seems to me lacking character and good architecture. The sprightly Marquise did not

miss these opportunities of employing her matchmaking gifts in favor of one or the other of these international comets crossing her horizon. She scored from the start by marrying off her prim, distinguished daughter Palma to her sister's stepson, Prince Mario Ruspoli di Poggia Suasa, one of the best looking, richest, and naughtiest men of his generation.

This must have happened before my birth, as their five sons were almost grown up when I married. All of them were tall, slim, easy to look at, and this tribe of carefree youngsters had proved a major attraction for the Marquise de Talleyrand's *salon*. It was their grandmother's intention to auction them off advantageously at high speed, but this cheerful prospect they frustrated by showing great independence in the management of their lives and gusto and variety in their choice of consorts.

She otherwise did her kin proud, and was responsible for many a spectacular Paris wedding, such as that of aging Duke de Gramont, twice a widower and a most outstandingly odd personality, to her seminiece, Donna Maria Ruspoli, young, beautiful, impecunious, simple, and amazing all at the same time, who was to become one of the strangest, loveliest, and most successful women in Paris.

Among Maria de Gramont's greatest devotees and admirers was Gabriele d'Annunzio, genius and monster all in one, whose every move, feeling, or adventure received world-wide advertisement. He met his glamorous young compatriot when emerging from the retirement following his flaming affair with Eleanora Duse, which he described in detail in his cruel and successful novel *Il Fuoco*. No one who has seen his totally bald head, penetrating gaze, pointed little beard, and sallow complexion can ever forget them. His short figure, quick movements, and immoderate gesticulation, as if talking with his hands and whole person, joined to a shower of brilliant phrases expressed in shrill tones with a strong Italian accent, were all equally striking. But for his pronunciation, I found his French

perfect, his Italian vocabulary and choice of words an unmitigated joy. His attraction was unexplainable, yet obvious. No woman was known to have resisted that wiry, enterprising little man.

I met him shortly after the publication of his *Forse che Sì, Forse che No*, a novel widely discussed for the vague perfume of incest spread along its sophisticated pages. Having relished dubious acclaim, he disappeared from public view while he concentrated on a book, or perhaps a new play for Ida Rubenstein, the rising star in his firmament. My cousin Hélène Vacaresco, in whose house we were, turned to him, mildly chaffing, "So, Gabriele, you have again vanished! All the beauties of Paris feel widowed."

"*Pour un écrivain, ma chère, il y a des moments où son sexe doit lui remonter au cerveau.*" [An author, my dear, must at times let his sex go to his head.] A remarkable utterance, worth being meditated or commented upon by many an author.

Continuing to unfold gossip and stories would but make me stray from my own tale and the accepted, meek, predebutante style I was at pains to acquire but in fact never truly possessed. I wore no make-up, just a faint touch of lipstick and a thin pencil line to replace my missing eyebrows, yet pale pink frocks and satin slippers failed to impart the demure appearance which ought to have been mine. My free speech worried Granny, who sadly moaned, "I don't know what to do about you, Anne-Marie. When you meet those nice, quiet French girls I am sure you shock them. Your conversation is not at all *jeune fille*."

It was small loss to me. Mutual interest never awoke between myself and the group of well-bred, sweet, unassuming society debutantes nicknamed *oies blanches* [white geese] for their supposed naïveté and more certain silliness. Their most extraordinary gift was an aptitude for unfolding, once married, into extremely worldly, fast young women. Only one friend did I make in those distant times, and Didi was fresh, sharp, amusing, and practically as outspoken as myself.

Three French princes took part in the pursuit of my fortune. One I found unpleasant and visibly mercenary. The second gave an irre-

trievable shock to my vanity. It happened after a party where I was asked to meet him. At our departure he lingered on to have a last word with our hostess, a beautiful connection of mine. Inadvertently my father forgot his umbrella and three seconds later we returned to collect it, only to catch sight of two figures so tightly embraced that no doubt could remain as to their intimate relationship. . . . To the credit of the third one I must set his refusal to go through the sordid interviews and bargainings the moment he realized how degrading they were, much to my approval and the discomfiture of old Bonteville, his champion.

One German princeling I met when undergoing a drastic thinning cure at Marienbad, but I was much too exhausted to take any notice of him. Finally came the embarrassing offer of King Nikita of Montenegro. By post, in an amazing letter to my grandmother—who had once, with Grandfather, visited his court and had remained a long-tried friend—he bluntly broached the subject, proposing his third son, Peter, like a pedigree colt, mentioning his exalted alliances and including a photograph.

Of all the varied experiences of this time some were amusing, some touching, and many downright exasperating. But I cannot omit the peak of the matrimonial negotiations in which my family and myself had been weltering for two years. Luckily I did not lose my sense of humor and proportion, nor Granny her solid common sense.

A lovely spring day dawned over a Paris clad in delicate hues of pearly grays. Green-gray were the budding leaves covering the trees of the Champs Élysées and the Tuileries in contrast with the cooler gray of stone buildings and fountains; and gray-blue were the blessed skies of the Île de France, dotted with pale pink trailing clouds fringed with grayish purple mist. On that delicate March morning I was, in a rather pompous and unexpected fashion, summoned into Granny's sitting room at the Hotel Continental, where we had settled for the Paris spring season.

The solemn gathering I met there was most unusual for this early

hour. My grandfather looked extremely serious; Granny a little bored and dubious; my guardian, Jean Vacaresco, was pacing the room in somewhat uneasy preoccupation. In a tall armchair sat his wife, Aunt Euphrosine, very stout, aged, and imposing, with a strong gray moustache, a still stronger will, and a sense of authority she thrust upon her own children and the family at large. Tense and serious, too, but more vocal, was their daughter Hélène, thin, as compared with her mother, nervously fingering the chain of her *face-à-main* during the course of a carefully prepared harangue.

"Anne-Marie, my child," the Greek chorus began. "A great event is preparing for you, and we think you are mature enough to be told about it and left the freedom of your own choice and decision."

This solemn tone rather impressed me. However, I still managed to answer lightly, "What's all the fuss about, pray?"

"It is no fuss and no joke," came the indignant reply. "You may be called to the honor of being almost, actually better than, a queen. The pretender to one of the mightiest thrones in Europe, scion of perhaps the most ancient and greatest ruling dynasty, His Royal Highness Don Jaime of Bourbon, Duke of Madrid, claiming as his due the crown of Spain, ready to fight for its redemption, has deigned to associate you with his hopes and his fortunes as his wife! We thought it our duty to ask your opinion before we give a definite answer."

"A definite answer!" I gasped. "You're mad. . . . How shall I know or give an answer before I've seen and really known the man? Let him come along some way or other, and then I will tell you what my feelings about him are. Before that, I have no opinion whatsoever on the subject."

"But the honor; the greatness; the glory of the name; the possibilities of the future kingdom! Child, *you* are mad. He has been a hero in the Chinese war . . . the Bourbons . . . the oldest reigning family in Europe. . . ."

Exclamations crisscrossed over the room. Everybody talked at the same time. Excitement, tinged with unmitigated indignation, was nearing its pitch. My grandmother alone kept aloof. I was very near bursting into uncontrolled laughter. They were all so funny in their undisguised snobbishness and amazement. At last, when some silence returned, I quietly reiterated my statement. "Let him come along, and when I know him you will have my answer. I bluntly refuse to marry the man simply because, whoever he may be, he is all right in principle. I want to see him first."

There was no use arguing. The little girl was adamant and self-willed. The astounded family had to give in, and it was decided that the Jean Vacarescos, acting as ambassadors, would negotiate an interview, as power to power, and I would meet my unknown suitor before I made a definite decision. I was blamed as a foolish child, but obviously my consent was needed for this startling proposal, whose glory my stupidity seemed to underrate.

What precisely took place between the emissaries of conceited royalty and my relatives attempting to explain why and how I refused to deliver the goods before having had a thorough look at the bidder, I never knew, but I was told that an elaborate "impromptu" meeting had been arranged at a fashionable picture exhibition, a high light of the Paris season.

The pavilion castle of Bagatelle at the far end of the Bois de Boulogne, where the exhibition took place, is a pure gem of French late eighteenth-century architecture, paralleled only by the small Trianon in perfection of line, balance, and proportion, and its charm is enhanced by the delicate fantasy of its decoration. Built in three weeks by the Count d'Artois, as a result of a bet with his sister-in-law, Marie Antoinette, this "folly" preserves in its very perfection the ephemeral grace of a one day's caprice. The rose gardens surrounding it, beautifully laid out and maintained, world-famous for their blooms, delicate colorings, and fragrance, made a delightful setting for the

charming little palace. Thereto we sallied in full family force to meet His Royal Highness, who was escorted by a small retinue of his devotees.

Pretending the most absolute surprise, my aunt exclaimed, "Ah, Monseigneur, what a lovely coincidence. Fancy meeting you here!" And she promptly proceeded to introduce everybody to everybody else.

I managed to conceal an inward giggle. The Prince bowed and kissed my hand, a most unusual gesture to a girl of seventeen. His suite of three gentlemen in voluntary waiting did the same, and all these greetings and exclamations gave me time to take a good look at my potential fiancé.

Don Jaime was dark, tall, broad-shouldered, rather heavy in build without being stout. His clothes did him no credit, being somewhat provincial and Austrian in style and cut. With large dark eyes, a well-shaped nose, not especially of the Bourbon type but sufficiently aristocratic, he would have been a handsome man but for a weak receding chin which contrived to spoil his whole appearance and deprive him of any masculine attraction. He also struck me as very old. Obviously his forty-one years seemed prohibitive to my girlish ideas of appeal and charm, neither of which he possessed. Nor had he much lightness in his conversation or any sense of humor. His intelligence was not very brilliant and his culture poor.

Five minutes had not elapsed since the "unexpected meeting" before we found ourselves isolated from our various attendants and rather embarrassed in our endeavors to start a conversation. The roses were not yet blooming. Lacking that topic, I thought the pictures might help ease the growing strain, and suggested walking into the gallery. As we strolled I put in a word about his ancestors, creators of the palace. My "historicopedantic" remark found no echo, but the idea of the pictures seemed to please him. It was an exhibition of Dutch and Flemish masters, but I was too concerned with my own adventure to take much notice of those displayed on canvas. I must

have found some more or less happy comments, for the Prince stopped in front of a stylized Virgin and Child, and said, "You seem to know a lot about painting."

"Oh, just a little. You see I am still very near my school days."

"Do you know anything about Gérard David? I see this is a picture of his."

"Not much, I confess, just that he belonged to the Flemish sixteenth-century school and painted a little in the style of Memling but not so well."

"Do you think his work has any value?"

"I just told you he was a minor master."

"No, not that. Do you think his work would fetch high prices?"

"That I couldn't tell. I have no idea of market values. But why do you want to know? Would you be tempted to buy this Gérard David Madonna?"

"Oh, no. I wouldn't dream of such a thing. I was just asking because I have a painting by that same name in my castle at Frohsdorf in Austria. You know, I inherited it from my father, who had it from our uncle, the Count de Chambord, Pretender to the throne of France. I was just wondering if I could make some money out of the picture."

"Are you so hard up?" I retorted. Then I stopped abruptly.

He caught my glance, understood my suppressed smile, and tried to correct himself. "I just meant I really would like to know the value of the things I possess."

Too late, in a flash, I had realized that poor Don Jaime had no choice between a rich heiress or slowly clearing away the pictures and ornaments of the home he had inherited. I took the hint, realizing he was a poor diplomat but, in a way, a simple man.

The rest of the party joined us for tea where the conversation sagged a bit. But on taking leave, Don Jaime said, "Will we meet again?"

"Why not? If you feel like it."

"Then would you come and have tea on Thursday at my aunt's, the Countess of Bardi?"

"With pleasure, if it suits you."

"Very much indeed. Aunt Adèle almost replaced my dead mother to me, and I would especially wish her to know you."

So things were rapidly advancing. The family was jubilant. I was amused, but ever since the picture incident my answer was decided. It was, "No." But why not let the story develop? It might be amusing.

Two afternoons later, at four o'clock sharp, we started for the famous presentation to Her Royal Highness Countess Adelgonda Bardi, by birth a Braganza, of the Portuguese royal family, by marriage a Bourbon of the Parma branch. Long widowed, she still wore eternal mourning. Her sister-in-law, Margherita, wife of the Spanish Pretender, Don Carlos of Bourbon, had been Jaime's mother. Intermarriage and inbreeding are so frequent with the Bourbons that it is impossible to memorize them without reverting to the *Almanach de Gotha*, that gospel of high society to be found in any Central European household, to make clear the intricacies of royal or princely kinships and alliances.

Countess Bardi was a thoroughbred and looked it. Impecunious, like the majority of her relations, she preferred, when in Paris, to stay with a friend rather than at some cheap hotel. This time it was with the Marquise de Saint Victor, a devotee of the Pretender's cause, one of the "*Blancs d'Espagne*," as they called themselves.

The penetrating charm of so many period houses in the Faubourg Saint-Germain is only too often marred by sad decrepitude. Such was the decaying old residence we were now approaching in the rue Bonaparte. Long ago it had been transformed into apartments which were full of atmosphere but without an ounce of comfort. Passing through an arched gateway, we crossed a damp, cobbled courtyard and rang the bell of the narrow side entrance. Two flights of shrinking, ill-lit stairs, their stone slabs worn by generations of footsteps, led us to the small landing of the flat I imagined full of beauty

and surprises. A perfume of the past floated over all the house—and a few other odors, too, which gave one a full survey of the neighbors' evening menu.

A shaky, ageless butler, with gray side whiskers, announced us. On entering, I was taken aback by the darkness of the room. The first thing my dazed eyes noticed was a thin little old lady curtsying almost to the ground. For whom was that sign of respect? My grandmother was already well ahead. It then struck me that the dowager Marquise de Saint-Victor thus paid homage to her potential "Queen," the possible future consort of the legitimate king of Spain. I have always been shy. For a moment I quite lost my bearings, but quickly recovered on finding myself charmingly greeted by the tall, thin, still exceedingly lovely Countess Bardi, who very kindly put me at my ease. Suddenly, out of nowhere, the Prince appeared. By then accustomed to the eternal twilight of the room, I realized he had been hiding behind a large tapestry in order to emerge at precisely the right moment. We sat down, tea was handed around, and general conversation began.

I could, for a moment, sit still and take in my surroundings. Five or six persons were gathered in the walnut-paneled room that was furnished with miscellaneous antique pieces, some of them very fine, mingling with ugly modern tables. The Aubusson carpet, curtains, and mirrors were well in keeping with the style of the house. I can still visualize each detail, and could describe at length the perfect curve of the Louis XV *bergères* covered in too dark brown velvet, the smoky portraits in their dull gold oval frames, the beautiful clock on the mantelpiece, and the inhabitants of the room.

In addition to those already mentioned there was an elderly couple, whose identity I forget, and the voluntary Chamberlain to the Prince, Count Jacques de Cathelineau, a marvelous old-world figure, well suited to this background. Middle-aged, not very tall, he carried himself in rigidly military fashion; bushy eyebrows shadowed his uncanny gray eyes; the most daring, long, upright, white moustache

barred his face. Descendant of a famous, aristocratic Vendée family, penniless nobles, defenders of lost causes and fading illusions, the Cathelineaus were warriors by tradition and upbringing. The man I was now observing had been wounded at the Battle of Patay, defending his faith and convictions as an officer in the Papal Guard. Now he had attached himself to another waning cause, the redemption, for his master, of the throne of Spain. He spoke with courtesy and flourish, in a thundering voice, his manners bore the *grand siècle* mark. I liked him well, appreciated his strong personality, but never could make out what he thought of me. Not much, I imagine, as I refused to be a tool for his schemes.

Somehow the party had skillfully revolved, isolating me in a corner with Don Jaime, and again I felt the conversation sagging. As a man of the world he ought to begin, I thought, racking my brain to find a suitable opening.

"I believe, Monseigneur, you fought in the last war in China? Why don't you tell me about it?"

"Would it really interest you? I'd love to tell you about my experiences, but I didn't think you would care. . . . You see, I have not much experience with young girls. And my cousins always shun the subject."

"But, you see, I am not like other girls. Not in my ideas, I mean. Granny says I am not at all *jeune fille*, so don't let yourself be upset by my age. Just go ahead with your stories."

"Oh. Then I can tell you about the revolt of the Boxers, the battles, and loot, and rape, queer Chinese habits, and opium. You know, I was quite an opium addict, for a short time. Are you not shocked? My family would be, if they knew what we are talking about."

"Let them be shocked. I am quite thrilled."

So he told me, openly, nicely, about opium dens and colored mistresses, his adventures and his life over there. He felt at ease, and I was highly amused. We could have become friends, but decidedly he would not make a good husband for me, or a real companion.

The attending group was overjoyed as they hopefully watched our conversation which was in reality so different from the conventional love-making they imagined.

Countess Bardi then came up to me, putting astute questions about my tastes and ideas until it was time to leave. Polite bows and criss-cross curtsies went on again. Jaime and I spontaneously arranged for another meeting, a dinner party in one of the fashionable restaurants in the Bois de Boulogne, the Pre-Catalan, I believe.

"Couldn't we manage it with less chaperoning?" I asked.

"I'm afraid that wouldn't do at all," he answered. "Not for myself, but my aunt and Cathelineau would object."

"Bother, can't you train them?"

"Not under the circumstances—you know what I mean."

"The . . . the . . . well . . . yes. I see what you mean. What a pity. But we will have it as you say."

The dinner was a failure. He did not dance well, neither did I. We could not talk freely; his tastes were anything but social; I was bored. We met again, got on agreeably, but marriage seemed less and less in our minds. Finally, families and followers became suspicious. All that talking and no practical result? On another fine morning, about four weeks after the first meeting, I was again summoned by my assembled elders and sternly warned.

"Anne-Marie, this cannot go on. It takes you nowhere. You must make a decision. You are just compromising yourself and embarrassing the Prince. We must be able to make an official announcement. Your engagement must appear in the papers with all the necessary pomp. Now. What do you two intend to do? Count Cathelineau has told your grandfather that he needs an answer."

"I am sorry to disappoint you, but I decline. I don't intend to marry Don Jaime, grand as he may be. I have implied it, and he has never actually proposed. I think the question is settled."

I bent my head, waiting for the storm. With amplified magnitude it broke in waves of reproach. I was an ill-mannered little fool. I

was putting them all to shame. I would regret it bitterly. At the final lull I was grimly asked, "And how shall we answer?"

I was prepared to tell Don Jaime myself that I liked him very much but did not intend to marry him. The suggestion was abruptly rejected. My grandfather preferred to write a shaming, seventeen-page-long epistle to Cathelineau explaining that I did not find myself worthy to share the burden of the exalted destinies to which the pretender to a mythical throne might be called. My indignant protests were of no avail.

The letter went. I did not see Jaime again until years later I met him at the gambling tables in Monte Carlo. We nodded, smiled, and did not speak. . . .

Instead of staying on in Paris I was whisked away to Biarritz where Aunt Marie Catargi had rented a charming little villa and offered us temporary shelter and me a respite to collect myself and become more amenable to my elders' suggestions. Three months later I was married according to my own views.

The Normal Sequence

*M*ID-APRIL, 1910—Biarritz—sweet seventeen—without illusions but full of hopes. The scenery was lovely and the weather divine. Foam-crested waves racing in from the New World across three thousand miles of the Atlantic broke violently on the abrupt cliffs or caressingly died on the wide, pebbled beaches of Old Europe. The snow-capped Pyrenees formed a distant background to the Basque *landes* dotted with bright yellow gorse and broom that scented the salty air with soft spring odors.

I had no regret for Paris or the failure of my quasi-royal marriage. I was preparing to enjoy fully this seaside interlude. Ever since Empress Eugénie had “invented” this resort, Biarritz had remained a fashionable meeting place for North and South. Launched by the Spanish Empress of France, it continued to be equally sponsored by Spanish aristocracy and French society, with a smattering of the usual rich Russians, Austrians, and Italians, plus a strong influx of smart South American women escorted by their slick dark menfolk, reputed to be the best dancers and lovers in the world. Before one confronted the exertions of the London or Paris seasons, this was the most popular resort to visit for a lively fortnight. Americans and English were few: and the Slavic influence was of no importance. Biarritz was pure Latin in behavior and mentality.

Bathing when tides were kind; motoring to some beauty spot or

to a renowned neighboring restaurant or a local inn; an occasional trip to San Sebastián for a bloodcurdling bullfight; rollerskating, flirting, and madly gossiping—these were the chief occupations. The golf clubs, hotels, and confectioners—of bars there was hardly a trace—and parties or dances in private houses were the favorite meeting places.

In the nearby mountains lived Edmond Rostand, then at the peak of his literary reputation, hailed as the day's best poet and the brilliant reviver of the long slumbering romantic theater. His lyrical plays enjoyed unparalleled success; his adoring interpreters, Sarah Bernhardt and Coquelin, were the idols of the French public. His name was symbolic of glory, and the mystery of his secluded private life added to the curiosity about him. The large white villa in Basque style which he had built for himself at Cambo, a foothill village barely ten miles distant, would have been the rendezvous of Biarritz society had its owners so wished, but they did not.

Rostand and his beautiful wife, Rosemonde Gérard, also a poet, descendant of the celebrated Napoleonic painter, lived in almost complete retirement, preferring their lovely house and flowered garden surrounded by forests and mountainous gorges to social activities. Contrary to the common rule in theatrical and literary circles, the Rostands were supposed to be a happy couple, with a few chosen friends as their only companions.

Very different were their sons. Maurice, the eldest, then around twenty, already trying his hand at poetry, had an appearance and demeanor much more startling than his verse. His long, elaborately ruffled hair of an extraordinary pale yellow shade, his large blue eyes, which appeared larger still in his dead-white face, his vivid red lips, his thin waist, protruding hips, and an effete manner—all these combined to produce an odd, rather amazing effect. He never missed a party, and I found him charming, agreeable, and intelligent. In fact, we got on extremely well.

His younger brother, Jean, handsome in a much more orthodox

manner—dark, muscular, thin, and silent—chose, in contrast to his overlyrical family, mathematics and science as his hobbies. Rather shy, except when his deep feelings were aroused, he walked quietly through drawing rooms and life, talking in a hushed, slightly hoarse voice. Personally, however, I much preferred his loud brother.

One bright Sunday morning, inclined to avoid crowds and enjoy freedom, I took the car and, accompanied by faithful Charier, went off without definite aim, simply intending to get into the mountains for lunch. Passing through Cambo, Mademoiselle said, "Anne-Marie, this is Sunday, and I cannot miss Mass because of your caprices. You know it is a deadly sin."

"But naturally, we will stop at the Cambo church. I understand it is delightful. Besides I would hate to see you in hell on account of my sins."

What an enchanting little old Basque church it was! Lined in beamed and smoky wood, it was filled with a penetrating atmosphere of faith and peace. An ancient, tottering priest was serving Mass to the singing of fresh boyish voices. I rarely felt so moved, and at first did not look around me, but suddenly I noticed in front of us the Rostand brothers in their pew. That was unexpected. The normal sequel followed. We met on the church step, and they asked whether I would have a look and drink at their house. I gladly accepted, thrilled at the thought I might meet the Rostand parents, and we ran up the steep road to the Villa Arnaga, Mademoiselle Charier panting a hundred yards behind.

At the top of the broad outdoor staircase I could distinguish a tall fair figure: Rosemonde Gérard, hazily reminiscent of the Princess Lointaine, heroine of one of her husband's early plays. Her demeanor and gliding step could appear slightly affected, also her fashion of speaking, but her actual words were as simple and natural as could be. There was, alas, nothing striking in her way of asking me what good luck brought me to the house or in her inference that she knew all about me from her sons.

On the terrace sat her husband, the genius, reading some magazine, so precisely true to his photographs it abolished the surprise for which I subconsciously hoped. Completely bald but for a thin fringe and rebellious front wisps of hair, a finely drawn face, *mat* complexion, with very dark expressive eyes, he talked in the somewhat emphatic way then fashionable among intellectuals. He was probably shy rather than conceited, hence his avoidance of social life and his exaggerated manner of expressing himself. My freely aired admiration rapidly broke the ice. He seemed willing to talk about his plays, all of which I had seen, and he enthusiastically elaborated on the inimitable qualities of the great Sarah. Conversation came easily. It was difficult to tear myself away from such fascinating company, the more so as I felt proud indeed to have penetrated this stronghold, shrouded as it was from the general public in a veil of literary aloofness.

In complete contrast I found the Château d'Arcangues and its four inmates. Here the tone was given by the Marquise d'Arcangues, reminiscent, with her graying curls, black velvet ribbon circling her neck, lace ruffles and frills, of an eighteenth-century French portrait. She equally possessed the period's charmingly courteous manners. Her house was never empty, and entertaining went on daily on a large and delightful scale, tactfully mixing old and young, serious and gay in Wednesday at-homes and continuous other parties. Anybody worth mentioning or meeting living in, or passing through, the whole region was sure to be asked to Arcangues, which made for a pleasant medley of ages and nationalities. In that large hall of hers, paneled in light pine wood with a broad staircase, covered when dances occurred with clusters of frivolous, laughing couples, I have had more fun than at many a formal party.

Vitality was instilled into the house by the two sons who were in their early twenties and full of pep and go. Pierre, the older, had an arrogant little nose and an engaging way of tossing his head of wavy brown hair. He was quite my choice, and I believe he in turn fancied me. For as much as was possible, in a very short time, considering

prevailing conventions and the strict eye of my family kept on me, we flirted to the best of our—or at least my—knowledge, and I could not have enjoyed it more. He was witty, cultured, and amusing, and an excellent dancer, perhaps a bit inconsistent, but he was the first man I had as yet met who gave me the impression that he liked me for myself and not for other considerations.

That I was immediately married off by local gossip to this attractive young man was only natural. I found most amusing the enquiring glances dowagers focused on us when we danced or talked together, as through their lorgnettes they closely observed the progress of our supposed engagement. Actually Granny herself was rather puzzled by my behavior. It was easy to mystify everyone as I had not made up my mind, nor had he definitely proposed—just made a few light hints at future possibilities. He may not have been Granny's complete ideal of a husband, but then Prince Charming, descending in person from his winged steed, would not have been found perfect for her cherished granddaughter.

Among the casual guests at the Arcangues was to be found rich, old, boring, and tactless Mrs. Moore, yet another noted Biarritz hostess. The lady's overwhelming snobbishness, her open house, and remarkable collection of priceless pictures and furniture made this American millionairess's invitations, whether to her villa or to her vast Paris *hôtel*, almost irresistible. Short and nearsighted, covered in plumes, bits of fur, lace, multicolored and sophisticated clothes, she was a figure of fun. She was also one of the worst gossips imaginable. Her insistence and success at surrounding herself with rank and title had inspired King Edward VII to a witty alteration of an ancient French saying: *Deux choses sont inévitables—La Moore et la Mort.*

Amid these gay superficialities came the first day of May when, unknown to me, my destiny was to be sealed. An especially beautiful day it was; the ocean Mediterranean-blue, the pale pink light evocative of an Asia Minor morning. In shiny green glades sprinkled with sun-flakes, one almost sensed the sap running high in reviving trees and

bushes. Love and mating were in the air. Coming back to the villa for tea, dizzy with sun and sea breeze, I found Granny sitting by the window watching me, a whimsical smile on her usually placid face. "You are late, Anne-Marie, and you'd better look at what is lying on the card tray in the hall—it might interest you."

"Who is it?"

"Go and see."

Sure enough on the tray lay a thick white cardboard, with highly embossed lettering, which read "Prince Jean Callimachi." Instinctively, I passed my finger over the sharp edges of the engraving and, in a detached tone, said, "Oh, so he, too, has at last come."

I had never met him, but the name did ring a bell, a very clear one, too. For nearly two years, since I had been launched on the marriage market, I had always heard him mentioned as the ideal husband, the man everybody would be delighted to see me marry. So much talk had there been around this possibility that we had done our best to avoid each other, an easy task, as we both lived abroad, under different circumstances, and it would have demanded a deliberate effort to meet. Now he had made it.

What was he like? I had no idea, and Granny didn't know him either. He was over thirty, a member of Parliament, independent, with high university degrees. He had bitterly grieved over his mother's recent death. There my information stopped, except for Léon Ghyka's ravings about Jean's fine and charming character, and his repeated assurance that I could not fail to like him.

Granny then added, "He has also left a note for your uncle who, you know, is his cousin. As Paul was nowhere to be found, your aunt and I opened the letter. He asks when he can come and visit, but none of us know him, and with Paul absent, I don't see what we can do—"

"But Granny, what do you suggest? You always know how to handle these funny situations arising on my account. He's come to view me, I suppose."

"Why put it so bluntly? Naturally, he has come to see *you*, not *us*, and I intend to ask him straight away to dinner. But with Paul vanished, how can I manage? I have sent Marie to look wherever she thinks her husband might decently be, and also the manservant to search the pubs. He might be drinking somewhere, which wouldn't make things easier. Yet you'd better go a moment into the kitchen and also see how the table is set."

"Oh, Granny, couldn't somebody else do that—Mademoiselle, or even you? I will rush to the hairdressers and have my hair arranged, and tell the maid to press my pink taffeta frock."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. See to the house as I tell you, and dress your hair yourself as simply as possible, and wear your little white. I won't have you all made up and fussy in a pretentious frock. It's not suited for this place, and it would be ridiculous, just showing off. Do as you're told, and don't get uselessly excited; your uncle may not turn up in time."

"But Granny, I want him to find me attractive, even if I don't intend to marry him. I don't want him to run away panic-stricken. I know I'm not pretty, please don't repeat it, but at least I want to look my best."

"Now, Anne-Marie, don't argue. I repeat, do as you're told. Anyhow, here is your aunt coming home alone, that's the first setback."

Pale, whiny, and worried, my aunt appeared, having run all over Biarritz without result and sent the servants by tram to Paul's favorite bar in Bayonne. By now it was getting late and the dinner party slightly handicapped. To keep calm, my aunt busied herself with the cook and the table and left me free to do as I was told. I went to my room, so excited and nervous I dropped and shattered my best silver hand mirror. That meant seven years a spinster—certainly a poor omen. My hair too went wrong—I could not get my parting straight—so that would also be a failure. And my dress was creased.

All at once I heard noisy arguments and loud voices in the corridor. Curious, I stepped out, half-dressed, to catch sight of my

uncle, dead drunk, dragged home by the servant, and surely unfit to help in Granny's social schemes. It would be better not to worry, and give the whole thing up, at least for tonight. But I had counted without Granny's persistence. She ordered us all in to dinner, firmly saw that her son-in-law got his head under a cold water tap, and, when sobered, sent him off to the Hôtel du Palais to see what could still be done. Her will was irresistible, and things turned out exactly as she desired with only two hours' delay.

The missing portion of the evening I learned later from Jean Callimachi, when we were comparing notes on our respective feelings and the odd way in which we had met. Apparently yielding to the insistence of his elder brother, joined to the entreaties of Léon Ghyka, who thought it was high time Jean married and that I would make him a suitable and amusing wife, he had decided to take that unsavory step and to risk the Biarritz trip to meet me. He took it like a medicine. He traveled nonstop from Bucharest to Paris, spent a gay night there, then, cursing his weakness, made off for the meeting, not knowing how to start on his unusual errand. After leaving his card and letter, he took a solitary, sulky walk, returned to the hotel in expectation, changed, and, still more sulky, had dinner by himself. Drinking his lonely brandy he saw my uncle turn up, rather wobbly. At last, he thought, here is a clue. . . . Now what comes next? He had never experienced anything similar. He had always expected to remain a bachelor, and by now he was convinced that was the only life for him. How feeble he had been in yielding to the advice of brother and friends!

"Hullo, Paul, how are you? Nice to see you. Have a drink?" said Jean, slightly embarrassed.

"Naturally, I'll have a drink," came the prompt answer.

Shyness, boredom, timidity at broaching the subject, whatever the reason was, they went on drinking. Jean remained sober, but Paul soon collapsed. Its very difficulty solved the problem. There was nothing Jean could do but take his very tipsy cousin home. Supporting

a staggering cousin was a novel way to meet one's possible bride-to-be, but somehow the ridiculousness of the situation saved the day, and Jean's sense of humor carried the meeting off easily.

My aunt immediately disappeared, taking her husband to bed. Mademoiselle vanished. Grandpapa was talkative and interesting; Granny shrewdly observant, using all her social gifts. My future husband, brilliant, apparently perfectly at ease, was extremely agreeable to my elders, tactful and aloof in his approach to me.

My own reactions were mixed. At first I was scared by Jean's age and appearance, but I was very soon attracted by his charm of manner and decided I would try hard to make him fall in love with me, or at least propose. Then would come the time to make up my mind whether a very tall, bulky, bald, bearded gentleman could make a suitable husband. At all events, before he left us at one o'clock in the morning (eleven was usually our latest hour) I asked him if he would take a sea-front walk with me the next day at noon, and he willingly agreed.

Late into the night I talked with Granny, who was simultaneously delighted and shocked at my whole behavior. I was accused of being both "high-hat" and almost promiscuous, quite unlike my usual self. What was the matter? Was I falling in love at first sight? She couldn't understand. . . . Could I explain?

"Well, Granny, he is very old, and too large for my taste, but he seems rather nice. And I am tired of all this marriage talk and those men running after me. I am nearly eighteen, soon I will be an old maid. So if I get on with him, and he shares some of my fundamental ideas, I might decide to marry him. But one thing I wish: even if I am not in love, I want to get him to be—and very soon, too. You just watch."

"You are a cynical child, Anne-Marie. Besides I wonder if it is wise to let you run around alone with an unknown man. I never did it with my daughters."

"But, Granny, they were another generation, and if you are keen on

my marrying this one, you must let me have my way. So it's for *you* to make up *your* mind."

The skies were kind, all through our short courtship, and the days just flew by full of endless conversations. From our very first walk that Tuesday morning, I realized that we were studying each other. With all his thirty-two years, supposedly vast experience, and the lingering perfume of numerous affairs marking his extremely gay bachelorhood, Jean still could not make me out. He had never met my like, nor did he ever quite understand me throughout our long married life. To the last I struck him as unpredictable, without any intention on my part.

We walked along the parade and beach, the old pier, and admired the far-reaching beauty of the Basque coast. Conversation flowed undisturbed; the air was mild and balmy; the hour, when "all Biarritz" was taking casual strolls or sipping *apéritifs* near the beach, well chosen. I noticed the astonished glances on people's faces at seeing me produce a brand new beau when I had been credited with some other fiancé or "flirt." I thoroughly enjoyed the morning.

Deeply involved in our talk we almost forgot lunch, and came home very late indeed, having made much headway during our first test of personality. It was already understood that Jean would take his meals with us. No snappy remarks were passed at my being late. Granny was beaming, the others unconcerned. Only Mademoiselle Charier, very stiff, took me apart for a sharp rebuke. "Anne-Marie, since when do you go out with young men without warning me? You are not engaged that I know, so I ought to have chaperoned you. It is not done, in France, for a girl to run around alone, except when affianced."

"Sorry, Charier dear, but I am not engaged. Besides I am not French, neither is he, and Granny knew. So please don't bother about my behavior just now. I am out of your control." I knew it came as a blow, but she accepted it silently.

The following day we motored across the Spanish border. I won't

in retrospect sentimentalize over a bygone love, then just beginning to bud like the first camellias Jean picked for me from their dark glossy bush. We did all the obvious things and relished them as eternally new and unexpected. Climbing wind-beaten hills, quoting sentimental poetry, turning pedantic amid the ornate woodwork of the Fuentarrabia church, once witness of Louis XIV's wedding to Infanta Maria Theresa of Spain. Though we, too, were practically strangers, we were making plans little in keeping with the indifferent attitude we tried to maintain.

I had only known Jean Callimachi for three days, yet the decisive moment was approaching, at least to my mind. I was still not in love but judged, in my reasonable, unromantic head, that here was the right man for me to marry. A safe harbor, a solid shelter against the storms of life, a potential friend, and a pleasurable companion. To dreamy young girls this may seem a flat statement; but for a rather dismayed and realistic one like myself it was true to type. Idealistic I may have been, in seeing it my duty toward my country and the great estates I there possessed, to unite my life to that of a Roumanian who would share my loves and beliefs and understand that, in spite of wandering tastes, my deepest roots were in the soil where I was born. Passionate love might have altered these feelings, but considering it all in cold blood, as I always intended to, Jean Callimachi was the perfectly satisfactory answer to my problem. One can brand me a juvenile cynic, and perhaps I was; my ultimate choice, however, I made alone.

Even to Granny my lips remained sealed. Unaccustomed to such silence from her outspoken granddaughter, she had given up questioning, and watched me with uneasy curiosity when we drove, in force, to the nearby little town of Bayonne, mentioned in guidebooks for its museum and famous restaurant *Le Panier Fleuri*. We naturally sampled both with unequal success. Being dragged by me through a museum is no joke, however small the place.

Lunch was better. Frustrated in her authority as governess and

chaperon, Mademoiselle Charier had got her own back by ordering an elaborate and sumptuous meal while I was acting the artistic guide. The result of her gastronomic endeavors was overwhelming; both quality and quantity were unsurpassed. Lunch lasted outrageously long. On emerging from the private *salon* Jean and I, to free ourselves of tedious supervision, decided fresh air and exercise were necessary to get over the feast. Walking the six-odd miles separating us from Biarritz would do us good. We tried it for a mile until the road was clear of family cars, then stopped in a spinney for a long quiet talk.

This time no poetical nonsense dimmed our practical views; we got down to hard barren facts in a helpful and efficient way. My attitude toward my father, my love for Granny, my dislike of children—whom he adored—all our tastes and ideas we openly and honestly discussed. We may have differed in our religious beliefs, clashed in political opinions, kept different hours, yet a growing intimacy was establishing itself and we agreed on the essential principles of life, an agreement which was to be the lasting basis of our future understanding. We had enough in common to create a reasonable, balanced union. However, of marriage he spoke no word, nor did he try to kiss me or even hold my hand. He positively set me guessing. I knew he was a man of experience in the ways of love of which I was ignorant. Then what was the matter with him? He seemed attracted to me, was charming, never left my side, but of a proposal he gave no sign.

Before dinner that evening he sent lots of flowers, but was not a bit more enterprising, and late at night I confided my troubles to Granny. I told her about Jean's whole attitude. Considering what we knew before hand of each other's qualities and drawbacks, three days of intense stargazing should suffice to make up his mind. I was tired of being viewed like a pedigreed mare; could none of them ask him or discover what his intentions were?

"But my child," Granny exclaimed, "you are brutal. A man can't fall in love and propose in four days. So rapid a decision would be almost insulting. Let him take his time. It is almost indecent at your

age to be so matter of fact. Why, Anne-Marie, no one can go and ask him his intentions. The idea is shocking. You must be patient. Believe me, it would all go much better with a little romance."

I was amazed that at Granny's age one still could be so sentimental. All right, then, if nobody would help me, I would take my future in my own hands.

After an agitated night I was, the following morning, highly strung and looking my best. The day was windy with a choppy sea and deep green waves spitting heavy foam on the deserted beach. In tightly belted waterproof and hood I waited for Jean's arrival. He turned up at eleven, in high spirits. We walked off tensely, and he asked where I wanted to go.

"To the very point of the Rocher de la Vierge, where the waves are the strongest," I answered.

"But it is much too windy. You are so tiny you will be blown away."

"You are quite big enough to hold me back," I retorted.

Its dark sugar-loafed point advancing like a prow into the raging sea, the rock stood high, separated from the mainland by a narrow iron bridge, unsteady and slippery. My ankles are weak, more for show than sturdy use, but with the help of a strong arm, I reached the chosen spot without mishap. At the far end of the railings, leaning over the waves in wind and spray, I turned round and shouted more than whispered to my hesitating companion, "Now, Jean, you know very well what we are driving at. Don't you feel you have something to tell me? To ask me?"

"Yes . . . well . . . do you mean . . . do you really think you would care to be my wife?"

"But naturally, you fool." . . . And at last I got my first, salty kiss.

We walked slowly, very slowly, home. There was so much to say and think and feel. We were dead serious, extremely happy, and not in the least romantic. . . . I still was not in love, but I was thrilled. His feelings I couldn't quite make out at that time, but

later I sensed that they were, as they remained, unexpressed and deep. I never knew how much he loved me, probably much more than I suspected.

I suppose there was a look of insolent triumph on my face when we got home, disheveled and gay, to break the great news to the family.

"Granny, congratulate us, we're engaged."

"How lovely, darling, so he did propose."

"No," broke in my fiancé, "she did the proposing and I was only too pleased. I didn't know how to begin. You see, it is the first time anything of this sort has happened to me."

Laughingly, I returned the compliment, "Do you think I had previous experience? Believe me, it is the first time I proposed—and the last, I imagine."

Granny gasped. "Anne-Marie, you really did that? How could you? I never believed you would dare. No girl in our family ever behaved like that."

"Well, it's high time we had some pioneers in the sacred family circle. And now I want to get married very quickly. No long engagements and delays. What do you think, Jean, would a fortnight suit you?"

"Darling, we will do just as you want, but a fortnight is very short. We have many things to consider apart from our own wishes."

Granny was so flabbergasted she couldn't talk, so Grandpapa stepped in, telling me to be reasonable. "If you still intend to marry in Maneshti, there are lots of steps to be taken—your business and fortune to be settled. You know how complicated the handing over of your estates by your guardian to your husband will be; it will require two months at least. Besides, you need some clothes—and perhaps Callimachi does, too."

He smiled, said he did not. There was just my jewelry and presents to buy, but other arrangements might take more time. The haggling and bargaining had started. Everyone blamed my capricious hurry.

After my having called dear Granny a monster, we all submitted to her verdict: we would be married just under two months, providing we found a suitable date and considered the Orthodox custom of celebrating weddings only on Thursdays and Sundays. We became engaged the fifth of May, exactly five days after we had first set eyes on each other, and the great date was fixed for a Sunday, the nineteenth of June.

These heated arguments had seen us through lunch. Going back to the lounge my fiancé casually offered me a cigarette. This time, I really thought Granny would have a fit. She went red, then pale at this unheard of scandal. A girl, one of her children, smoking in public! She couldn't get over it and murmured faintly, "But, Jean, this can't be done. You don't seriously mean it. You won't allow her to smoke?"

"I am sorry, Granny, but I decidedly wish her to smoke. I want my wife to share as many as possible of my tastes, and I am an inveterate smoker. I find it a graceful gesture in a woman. Anne-Marie, as you may not know, enjoys an occasional cigarette, and I'm enchanted she does. Please don't be upset. You'll soon forget to notice it."

"I suppose I must hand her over to you, but I will go on being shocked. In my day, the first thing a man offered his bride was a rose, not a cigarette."

Extremely amused, and gaily puffing away, I remarked, "It would be wiser to stop bullying and settle down to work on the wires we must send our people at home, who will have the surprise of their lives. Both Papa, who hasn't an inkling of our meeting, and your solemn brother will be amazed at such quick work, knowing your hesitating nature. I'll write mine and you dictate me yours."

For once my suggestion was unanimously adopted, and soon the Biarritz post office was flooded with over two dozen telegrams announcing our engagement. Anxiously, I awaited my father's reaction. It came the following morning, emphatic and cagey as I had foreseen. I was making a good enough marriage to please my parents, he

knew my husband well and could appreciate his qualities; but that I asked neither for his advice nor his consent he never forgave me.

A heavenly week followed, so carefree, hopeful, and calm, I lack words to describe it. I was much too happy to be sociable and let poor Granny cope with the crowd of our Biarritz friends, their calls, congratulations, and curiosities.

A week of heavenly peace have I said? It was really just a short breather, after which we were snatched by a quick train to Paris and the boredom of shopping for trousseau and clothes. I hated every minute of it. Neither luxurious furs, frocks slick or daring, nor the most suggestive underwear could bring a smile to my lips, much to Granny's amazement and dismay. My stepmother, who swiftly made her way to Paris to offer her experienced advice and perfect knowledge of clothes, couldn't get over my indifferent attitude. Why should I condescend to explain that, being diffident and dissatisfied with my looks, I deemed useless this endeavoring to improve them by artifice and imagined my success was to be sought elsewhere, on purely mental lines? I later recognized my mistake and attempted to become a well-dressed woman, but my wedding clothes bored me to distraction.

Not so the new independence bestowed upon me by the magic word "fiancée." The taboo set on night clubs was immediately lifted and I expectantly prepared for a most revealing sight. The decency of these haunts, until yesterday forbidden to my girlish curiosity, disappointed me. Was this really all the wickedness and flavor of evil I had secretly hoped for? Maybe I was in the wrong, for in a long, agitated life I have never discovered where the subtle imaginary line between fun and vice must be drawn. In those Paris *boîtes de nuit* I witnessed nothing but sophisticated normality, yet in one I was to have a new and unexpected experience.

An Offenbach revival was always a fine treat, and that of *La Vie Parisienne*, which Granny had seen with its original cast, was an even more special one. She had shed silent happy tears during the performance, then asked an old friend to escort her home, while in a

foursome, Papa, his wife, my fiancé, and I dipped into the gaieties of Paris night life. First a marvelous supper at the Café de Paris with champagne flowing. The others, better trained, drank freely, and I felt it my duty to follow suit. By three o'clock the place was dreary and we prepared to make a change. A real late night thrilled me, but I halfheartedly protested, "What will Granny say?"

"Never mind, you're with me," answered my father.

We adjourned to the far end of the Bois de Boulogne. Dance and drink were going strong at the Château de Madrid. I felt a bit dizzy, but did not lose my bearings. My fiancé was a poor dancer, but Papa was splendid and safe. We were all very gay when unexpectedly Jean decided on more food and asked for the menu. Distinctly and slowly I uttered, "Sorry, not for me."

This was unheard of in the eyes of my greedy fiancé. He insisted, begged, cajoled. "Food is essential, darling . . . believe me . . . please, just a little artichoke salad . . . it is lovely, and will do you good."

The lively *tzigane* band was playing a recent tune; a famous pair of dancers were performing a violent apache waltz with blood-red scarves flashing in the dim light. The vision will never fade, nor the sound of the music mingling with my hoarse voice, "No! Certainly no artichoke salad for me."

Too late. My plate was already piled with what appeared to me a revolting mass of green. Jean, a little tipsy too, grew more insistent. I went white with rage. Controlling the growing sickness was bad enough without this. I let loose my temper. Plate and salad flew at Jean's head, followed by my ruby engagement ring, and a scream, "Here. Have it for good. May I never see you again!"

I rushed away, sobered by rage, and drove rapidly home, where poor Granny was still waiting. She was less upset than I feared at seeing me so late, haggard, and obviously tight. She rapidly sent me to bed, insisting on two aspirins.

Rested and slightly ashamed, with just a touch of a hang-over, I

stolidly refused the following morning to see or hear of my ex-fiancé. Flowers, notes, sweets, and Granny's pleading were disregarded, and I flatly refused to be lured to the telephone. By seven in the evening I was still adamant, but properly made up and dressed. Sulking suits me badly. I can never keep it up, and by this time the room was crowded with flowers and littered with unopened envelopes. I was slowly thawing when Jean Callimachi walked in with more presents, and surely more kisses, and with the simplest of apologies, the ones that always work. . . . I retrieved my large ruby ring and blotted out my first hang-over and first lovers quarrel.

Our last Paris days flew by, boring and busy with millions of nothings. My fiancé went to Brussels to collect his belongings and buy me lovely jewelry and yards of precious old lace I never fancied. With a light heart and a caravan of people, trunks, and boxes forming around me, I embarked on the Orient Express for the forty-eight-hours' run that would take me to my strange new relatives, to the last preparations for my wedding, and the joys and hopes of my new life.

We Both Said Yes

*O*RIENT Express, First Class only. The quick, international train deluxe was now taking me back to my country, my old home, my unknown future. . . . That train, with all it stands for, the odd mentality it breeds, its peculiar smell and familiar stations, what a part it has played in my apparently settled, yet nomad existence.

Orient Express, my mental home. In your narrow berths and small compartments I felt as much at ease as in the house of my birth. The deep nostalgia for your rocking nights, poor food, and weird meetings haunted my sedate, anxious war years. For me you symbolize an unofficial fifth freedom, the freedom of escape. How many emotional crises have you helped me avoid or better endure? How many sorrows your gentle motion has swept off my weary mind. Peace and oblivion amidst permanent agitation, there lies the mystery of your soothing charm. Forty-eight hours of perpetual motion alternately meant my return to home and duty or a lovely escape to the Western miracle. For many years this was the easy aim or dour necessity of all my plans and decisions.

More than the rapid flight of planes or the long span of sickness-ridden days on an ocean liner, Orient Express—you meant for me the acme, if not of travel, at least of the continuous movement I sorely need. Will you ever again cross freely, unhindered by politics and strife, the wide expanse of Europe's plains and mountains? I wonder, yet still hope.

Exhausted by our Paris interlude, I spent most of the time in my compartment, sometimes daydreaming, then dreading the meeting with my future in-laws, sometimes pondering the long, uncertain prospects of my own future, or, most often, indulging in strenuous introspection. To what extent was I prepared for this new life? How would I solve its multiple problems? Self-study and analysis were, and still are, my pet sins, dimming many a sound impulse, stifling my scanty creative gifts, occasionally blinding me by sophisms to glaring reality. In all great crises, as in the case of my engagement, I always acted by instinct, and was usually right. But once I had so acted I could never refrain from building a flimsy scaffolding of reason to justify my decision and keep it in line with the impeccable logic I so highly appreciated. Descarte's *Je pense donc je suis* had left an indelible effect on my mind: pure reason was the god of my youthful days. Passion may since have modified this worship, but deep in my inner self the creed endures.

I was neither a typical example of my day's young womanhood, nor especially representative of my country. I was simply the product of a somewhat unusual education, with most of my ideas and mental make-up already crystallized. Because I was addicted to self-examination I knew myself fairly well, probably as well as I do now. That I was straightforward and honest was no merit, I was thus born. My quick temper is still with me, mitigated by a gift of kindness. My natural pessimism allowed me to expect little. My instinctive selfishness could be softened by affection. I was grateful for my sense of humor that allowed me to laugh at myself even more freely than at others. I hoped I had a sprinkling of intuition and sensitiveness. Added to my propensity for unmitigated emotion I possessed a solid gift for friendship. My favorite precept for myself was *Tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner*, an aphorism which might prevent rash condemnations and help one forgive in others the shortcomings one is so ready to overlook in oneself.

In addition to the opportunity for collecting myself, the journey was

an excellent way to become acquainted with my fiancé's traveling habits or manias, since I foresaw that our future trips would be numerous, and since one never really knows a man before sharing some travel experience. My future husband victoriously stood this first test, and with due respect for our diverse idiosyncrasies we for years traveled happily together, even when home life had become difficult.

Hours fled in thoughts and many a grand or dingy station had passed since the Gare de l'Est, each revealing by the produce on its platform the occupations with which the city extending behind the smoky, whistling railway station busied itself. The specialties everywhere available during the French stretch, such as Nancy's fresh macaroons spread on greased sheets of thick paper or the jars of delicious *foie gras* found at Strasbourg, were usually disregarded. Dining-car food was excellent at this stage of the journey, and one was too tired to heed the vendors. A little later one registered better. Munich was lavish in newspapers, books, and thick beer. A few miles further Salzburg offered flowers and smiling, fancy-dressed girls. Linz favored the well-known *torte* bearing its name, whilst Pressburg sponsored sparkling pale ale. Vienna had a variety of promises in store: minute, tasty sausages handed over neatly packed in cardboard containers complete with chokingly hot grated horse-radish and mustard; coffee appeared, white, black, or iced, capped with a huge bonnet of whipped cream—not to omit a humorous Austrian weekly, the *Lustigen Blätter*, my grandfather never missed buying. Gerbaud's renowned candies met one in Budapest.

The Roumanian border was approaching; food was less exciting, but it was fun to hear again the old native idiom, talked at top speed in shrill tones by the custom officials and locals. We leaped to get national newspapers and learn how many government changes or political scandals had occurred during our two days of travel. Now we were at Ploeshti, the last stop before arrival. The sandwich trays, smells, dust, and porters of our home station were all agreeably familiar.

The afternoon had been dragging, endless, and flat like the plain we were crossing. The sun was now setting in a glory; oblique rays bursting into my compartment almost as violently as my maid, warning me of our nearing arrival. In a few seconds I was ready, once again noticing that the last twenty minutes of a long journey are by far the longest. There we stood piled like sardines in the corridor, exchanging good-bys with traveling companions, absent-mindedly listening to remarks on the height of the corn or new methods of growing hops. I waited, reflecting that at heart each Roumanian is a born agriculturist and miscarried politician. Nervously I put Jean a last question about his family, how to identify and meet them.

"Darling," he answered, "I have over ten times given you all the necessary information and advice you will anyhow not follow. So just try to be calm and composed, not a bundle of nerves."

He was still speaking when the train pulled in amidst porters' shrieks, engines whistling, and the usual bustle of a Roumanian platform; yet it moved so slowly I could at a glance take in the compact group of my future husband's family, stiffly standing in front of other relatives or friends come to greet us. What an extraordinary wax-figure appearance they had. . . . Why so pompous and old-fashioned? Age, clothes, demeanor? I could not say. But although warned, the sight froze my blood. Another century was stepping out to receive me into the family fold. . . . By comparison my fiancé seemed a sprightly youngster! . . .

The Callimachis were a trend of mind, not a shape or costume. Further acquaintance was to confirm this initial impression. In that small cluster of feminine figures, my brother-in-law Alexandre Callimachi stood out, extremely handsome in an archaic manner, erect and impersonal, with a pale Byzantine face, long graying beard, penetrating yet smiling gray eyes, and a portly figure clad in what always appeared to be a frock coat, be it the most ordinary of lounge suits. His haughty courtesy, sparse gestures, and slow emphatic

speech conveyed the impression of a Mount Athos saint, lost in a world of steel and harsh business. His approach to life was as medieval as his appearance. Aloof and distant, partly to conceal an almost embarrassing timidity, his attitude appeared one of utter conceit, majestically cloaking his worse pranks and amorous ventures, for Alexandre was anything but a paragon of virtue. Fourteen years my husband's senior, older even than my father, head of his family, my brother-in-law adopted with all and sundry, but specially with his kin, a superior, almost condescending demeanor that like his steady grandiloquence never gave way to simplicity even when all trace of embarrassment had melted away. Prince Alexandre must have even made love pompously.

Standing beside her imposing husband, Marie Callimachi's short podgy silhouette showed no angles, only rounded lines, curves, and frills, from her flounced and tucked pale gray dress and feathered hat to the elaborate high-heeled gray suede shoes, molding a pair of remarkably tiny feet. From this vestimentary confusion, completed by a fluffy, matching ostrich scarf, her small face emerged, round, astonished, and froglike, with protruding green eyes, a snub nose, rather thick mouth, and frizzy fairish hair. In her short arms she carried a lovely bouquet of copper-tinged roses, and from the first instant I knew that her conversation was the minor echo of her revered husband's violently reactionary political views.

Less conspicuous were Jean's two sisters, tall, and carrying themselves well. Ralloue, dark and elderly, shunning any pretence to smartness in her pure Victorian puce, vigorously crushed me to her ample bosom in motherly fashion. She later sincerely took me to her heart, a compliment from this genuine saint, who was divinely naïve, a religious maniac too, perhaps a bore, but so kind and sweet I had nothing but gratitude and affection for her. Here were real Christian charity, forbearance, faith, and although grieved by my pagan behavior, she treated me like the stray sheep of the flock, convinced I

would one day repentingly rejoin it. With all her saintliness she drove her husband half crazy and he finally divorced her, practically on an accusation of mental cruelty!

Beside her stood Jean's younger sister, twenty years my senior. Tall and distinguished, the only pair of blue eyes in the family, a natural blonde with a sense of humor, she was too hazy, strict, and idealistic at the same time to avoid making a complete failure of her belated and short conjugal life. She played no part in mine for I rarely saw her and she was, soon after, killed with her husband in a stupid motor accident.

Discreetly standing behind her former pupils I caught sight of Miss Paxton, the aging English governess and friend who had brought up the whole brood, including a third sister, dead when I met my in-laws. She struck me as really smart in her simple, well-tailored black silks, and she undoubtedly was the grandest character of the lot.

So that was the strait-laced family I was entering, outwardly stern yet visibly well-intentioned on my behalf. To the peculiarities of its members I promptly became aware, the past glories of the name were so strongly impressed upon me by Prince Alexandre they were impossible to overlook.

The name had originally been Calmash. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, Tudor Calmash, a simple landowner, had high ambitions for his sons. The eldest, Gabriel, entered the church and ended as Metropolitane of Moldavia. Tudor formed even grander plans for his second son, John. In those days the lands of Roumania were and had long been under Ottoman suzerainty. For nearly three hundred years Constantinople, now named Stambul, had been under the Turks, becoming a center of exchange for all Moslem countries. In the past, Greek civilization had combined with the Roman to form here the Byzantine culture now mingled with the Oriental ways of the conquering Turks. Yet some Western influence and commerce survived, by special grant of the Sultan, in the quarter of Pera, still

inhabited by Genoese, and in the purely Venetian Galata. Where better than in this cosmopolitan city could a willing young man acquire broad knowledge and information on world trade or high international politics and intrigue? To Stambul then came young John, as a student in the Greek quarter, the renowned Phanar, which preserved intact its learning and Greek Orthodox tradition.

The name, however, was a hindrance, its coarse Slav sound disturbed refined Greek ears, and for convenience sake it was altered to the more shapely and Hellenic "Callimachos." It carried a joke or symbol, too, meaning "lovely war" or "beautiful warrior," according to the pronunciation of the last syllable. For John Callimachi the change worked well. From student he rose to be Great Dragoman (interpreter) to Sultan Selim III. Then, having gained adequate political knowledge, added to his own great sense of intrigue, and the wealth necessary for bribes, he worked his way to nomination as voivod or reigning prince to his native country, Moldavia, which was a vassal of Turkey. His outstanding ability gained him the confidence of the Sultan, and numerous gold-net purses filled with ducats had warded off rivalry and silenced slander. As a ruler John did well and actually died in his bed, a rare feat for those Phanariot princelings whose lives usually ended violently. Of my own forebears, one was drowned in the Bosphorus tied in a bag, two were beheaded, and at least one starved to death in a Constantinople dungeon.

Gruesome tales were familiar to any descendant of old Roumanian families, and that of the Callimachis was no exception. Four of its members had, at different periods and with varying fates, occupied the Moldavian throne. Their names were linked with the introduction of a printing press into the country, which fastidiously produced Bibles and prayer books, and with a code of laws which governed Roumanian destinies until 1866.

The personalities of these princes were also preserved in the dulled and grimy family portraits. Gloomy or benignant, they all bore a similar air of aloof distinction, if not always beauty. Their long noses,

large eyes, and emaciated, bearded faces were enhanced by the characteristic boyar costume they invariably wore. This was a long, ample caftan of diversely colored velvet or silk, widely bordered and lined with luxurious sables and marten, hung loosely over an equally long straight underrobe of Indian silk, watered or plain, but always belted with a large contrasting sash or gold-studded leather girdle. On their heads towered huge bonnets, showing according to shape and trimmings their political rank and social standing. Over a foot high, these odd fur or velvet hats were topped by a colored crown indicating the wearer's official position—green lining for Minister of War, red for the Minister of Finance, or perhaps, ermine-white, adorned with a long flashing diamond spray, symbolizing uncontested authority, for the reigning Prince.

For two hundred years the Callimachis justified the "beautiful warrior" translation of their name, for they sustained a remarkable average of good looks and sometimes were amazingly handsome. Judging from photographs and pictures, my willowy, elegant father-in-law, with his melancholy blue eyes, drooping Gallic moustache, and fine presence must have been a credit to the family tradition. His son Alexandre was handsome in similar fashion. But some mysterious Eastern blood must have dropped into the veins of my mother-in-law's ancestors, for she belonged to the Russian branch of the Moruzi family, originally Lazes from Venetian-controlled Trebizond on the Turkish shore of the Black Sea. My husband's high cheekbones, small, vaguely blinking eyes, short nose, and chubby face, clear, vivid complexion, very red, rather pursed mouth, pointed beard, and round head were unmistakably Slavonic and in a way attractive. His physical make-up, too, was Russian in its broad-built squareness but was redeemed by long shapely legs, thin wrists and ankles, and small feet. He was over six feet five inches tall and made me, by contrast, appear a pigmy.

Even before I fully understood the force of the family tradition

I was beginning to grasp how independent my fiancé had been, since he came from such a stronghold of formality in accepting my free and unconcerned behavior—which was probably the greatest attraction I held for him.

Not until two days after our arrival was I to visit the last of Jean's relatives, his respectable, motherly aunt Emma Beldiman, whom I previously knew as a delightful, frivolous, not too clever, but warmly human old lady. Once again Jean warned me and showered good advice, but in this case I felt that heeding his counsel was unnecessary. She had a child's mind, and a benevolent heart.

Half satisfied with my flippancy on his respected aunt, Jean called shortly before noon to formally introduce me in my new status of obedient niece. Wearing my newest flowered frock and most perky straw hat, I climbed beside him into the open cab, driven by the best Russian coachman that semi-Oriental Bucharest could still provide. His wrinkled face, beardless as behove his *škaptzi* sect, he split from ear to ear in a broad grin when he saw me, and spontaneously exclaimed, "Good luck, *Conizza* [little miss] Anne-Marie. Kiss your hand. You're making a lucky choice."

Like all town drivers he well knew Radu Vacaresco's daughter, and before I had time to acknowledge this rather intimate remark, his long winding whip had lightly touched the two full-blooded Orloff stallions. They started full speed, their tails swerving, their well-kept manes flowing in the wind of their gallop. Our route lay from the distant *Chaussée* through the center of the town, swarming with summer activity. Appealing gypsy flower vendors lined the streets. In their rows of chairs at lively café terraces showy young officers in tight-fitting scarlet uniforms discussed whimsically and in detail the charms of the more or less professional beauties strolling past in flimsy attire—beauties visibly willing to attract attention, accept homage, or skillfully affect an air of pretended indifference. Why should a Bucharest shopkeeper bother to produce an elaborate window

display, when the manifold street happenings were sure to distract his customer's gaze? In my country a pretty girl on the doorstep is a surer bet. . . .

Past the Royal Palace; past Capsa, the most fashionable sweetshop in Eastern Europe, a poem of sugar and scent; past the Boulevard Hotel—the single one in town reputed to be bug-free, and even that with a question mark—and left we turned, still in the breathless flight of tapping hoofs and swirling wheels. How those Russian *birjars* avoided accidents and manslaughter I never knew. At length we came to quieter surroundings, where in deep gardens stretching behind small, calm houses, acacia trees in full bloom filled the warm air with their sweet odor. Then we entered a narrow, cobbled alley, reminiscent of some street of Bursa or Smyrna.

In front of a tiny two-storied house, the horses stopped as suddenly as they had started. Behind a low provincial wooden gate and a lilac bush half obstructing the small entrance, gay geranium window boxes greeted our arrival. No bell, no bolt, no servant; we just walked into the narrow passage dividing the dining room from the antiquated sitting room, papered in dull, chocolate-brown tones, as late Victorian in appearance as its purple plush armchairs and sofa or dull gold occasional tables.

One light spot shone in this dim little room, the pure white linen camisole Aunt Emma, seated at her large Bechstein piano, was wearing over a skirt of undefined black stuff. Erect on her stool, straining her tired muscles in a daily endeavor to defy threatening rheumatism and keep her old fingers working, her brown wig slightly swaying under the effort to make good a Schubert "Lied ohne Worte," the old lady was painfully plodding away on the ivory keys. On catching sight of us she literally leapt from her stool, clutched me in her arms, fondly kissed me, and said simply, "At last, my darling," thus alluding to the fact that for two years she had pestered her nephew to try and make him marry or at least meet me. A brief reference to

my grandmother's health, a kind message, and the old lady hastily turned from polite conversation to topics more in her line.

"So you two are just back from Paris. . . . Yes, yes, I know all about the date of your wedding, Alexandre told me. . . . In the country . . . that I know too . . . I am too old to come . . . but never mind . . . you will do quite well without me. . . . Paris, that is what I want to hear about, the theater, and your fun, and above all your frocks. Anne-Marie, is it true that you now run around practically naked at night? With just shoulder straps, and your breasts showing? If so, I must see how it looks. You must come to see me the first time you put on an evening dress. You promise, my child. Jean, you must make her do it."

I could hardly keep from laughing at this explosion of senile futility, and the embarrassed expression on my fiancé's face.

"Naturally, Auntie, I shall come to see you in full array, but if you expect me to be indecent you'll be bitterly disappointed. My clothes may be less prim than your nieces', but I'm sorry to say there is nothing shocking about them. No breasts showing, alas, only shoulders and back. No split skirts either. Nothing spectacular. I actually believe that Paris was much naughtier in your own young days, before 1870."

Poor darling, I fear she was dismayed having waited so long for a bright young thing to relieve the formality of her family surroundings. Life had been unkind to her, yet her frivolous childishness had survived the ordeals of an unhappy union, entered upon when hardly fifteen, to a witty man she adored and who treated her badly. An unfaithful husband running a subversive political paper, continuous money shortages, difficult sons marrying against her will, her husband's untimely death suspected to be suicide, and her financial ruin had not sufficed to quench her adolescent gaiety. Disarmingly naïve, she could see harm in no one, and curiously enough this saved her. For her tactless husband had installed his lovely mistress in his wife's

house. After his death the mistress turned out to be the solace of Aunt Emma's last years, an inseparable friend, and a strong prop in adversity.

Immoral the combination may have been, but astoundingly efficient. At the time of my marriage, Mrs. Frossi was hunchbacked and ageless in appearance. With solid middle-class common sense, she took her former rival's affairs in hand, running the house on next to nothing, tottering about full of funny jokes at which she was the first to chuckle, busying herself in a spotless kitchen with rose or citron jam, and concocting tasty little dishes she proudly served her companion's guests. Aunt Emma could in peace go on using her birdlike brain to study my recent frocks; her guiding angel was there to free her of practical worries or ward away further financial threats.

All family duties performed; the business arrangements settled; Jean off to his Moldavian home to put it straight, I had a week on my own to spend at Maneshti before our wedding which was taking place there according to my constant wish. The pomp of the town marriages I had often witnessed held no attraction for me. But for its ritual beauty the ceremony was devoid of religious meaning, and I yearned for quiet intimacy, not worldly ostentation. I uselessly attempted to shorten the guest list, already reduced to a minimum, except for Granny's insisting on extending some neighborly invitations and Jean's begging me to ask a few politicians of the Conservative party on whose benches he sat in Parliament. Reluctantly I had yielded, but still hoped for a quiet wedding.

The moment my fiancé joined us I realized I had by no means achieved my aim. The simple country wedding of my dreams was rapidly turning into a semiofficial function. The Home Secretary, the Minister for War, and the President of the Senate were coming as personal friends of Jean. That meant special telephone wires had to be set up and a whole police retinue catered for. The house was full of movement and agitation, yet I was so pleased to see the hybrid

period of my engagement ending that I little resented the alterations brought to my initial plan and thoroughly enjoyed the preparations. Cars and couriers were running to and fro from town; the arrival of my in-laws was mixed up with that of van loads of food; extra servants were hired for the event; and a gypsy band brought to play for practically thirty-six hours.

Out of his flamboyant yellow limousine, Léon Ghyka's diminutive silhouette emerged half hidden by the blooms of a huge rhododendron bush contained in our wedding present, the hideous, crystal Gallé vase, he was carefully carrying. He was to be my witness at the Registrar's office and arrived dressed up for the occasion in morning coat. We were all, including myself, noticeably overdressed for the tiny whitewashed town hall of our village where the legal contract was signed. My mauve muslin frock with lace insertion was pretty simple, but my large black hat trimmed with pale purple ospreys was hardly in keeping with our rural setting.

The big dinner party following was not the gay affair I had vaguely expected. The attendants, and even bridegroom, were so much older than myself that a veil of formality extended over the whole evening. My husband, at least, seemed happy; so was I, and nothing that night could have dampened my spirits.

I slept badly awaiting the greatest day of my life to dawn. Sleep overcame me late, and I awoke to realize my maid had not called me and that the whole house was already buzzing with unusual activity. Unforeseen visitors seemed to drop in from all sides; the servants, completely out of control, rushed aimlessly right and left; an expert hairdresser busied himself tidying rebellious wisps and curls on various female heads, endeavoring to achieve some elegance, although no one but my stepmother was really smart. An enormous hybrid cross between a bus and a charabanc, bringing the members of the church choir, had broken down en route, and on belated arrival the scared singers were being treated to numerous *txuicas* by our imaginative staff.

"Don't give them too much, else they fall out of tune," I heard Aunt Anna's potent voice shouting.

The Bishop appeared ahead of time. Granny was not ready, yet insisted that she alone could properly greet him, so the flustered bride stepped in, replacing a vanished maid, to help Granny fix her simple headdress, fasten reluctant hooks, arrange the gracious folds of an antique Chantilly scarf matching the lace-trimmed dress. Granny kept protesting during the process, sweetly bidding me look to my own appearance, so important today.

"Never mind, Granny," I answered. "I have the plainest of wedding dresses. You actually objected to my wearing no train or trimmings, now my simplicity comes in handy. No hooks, no extra fastenings. I must just slip it over my head and tie it with the sash. I will dress my hair as usual, but I will definitely need help to have that lovely gold thread attached under my orange-blossom halo and spread all over my back. It seems terribly heavy; I'm sure it weighs a ton."

I babbled along while dressing Granny, thinking Jean had done me proud with the gold-spun *beteala*, our traditional bride's headgear, and the richest I ever saw. An hour later six women relatives were hard at work to maintain it steadily affixed on my head. No one, however, told me that my husband, who had no right to see me before we met in church, had almost ruined the ceremony by forgetting that most vital item—the wedding rings! A last instant messenger had rushed to Ploeshti, contriving to produce a bulky pair of gold rings, so coarse I soon refused to wear mine. But my husband, abiding convention, died thirty years later, his ring still tightly riveted on his left-hand finger.

At last the great moment came. Under a blazing midday June sun, with Granny leaning on my arm, we walked the hundred yards to our village church. A vague consciousness about my looks, perhaps a lingering anxiety, is all I recollect of my frame of mind. Everything went according to plan, no blissful miracle happened, no disastrous mishap either.

My husband and father received us on the steps, escorted us into the church, where I felt swathed in waves of sound, clouds of incense and, mechanically following the service, correctly performed the familiar ritual gestures. Granny took me to the Virgin's altar image. Faltering under my guilt burden I took my bow, kissed the ikon, and returned to my assigned place in the center of the sanctuary. When the crown was set on my head, I drew a pin out of my hair, according to custom, to be given the girl I wished to enter the ties of wedlock first after me; and three times I named her while dancing round the altar. In a haze I drank the wine and received the twice blessed ring.

"Child, don't gaze into vacancy." This remark of my youth came back to my memory. I had entered my new life gazing into empty perspectives. The ceremony drew to its end. I caught sight of Granny wiping a furtive tear and suddenly awoke to my surroundings. There were guests to greet, congratulations to acknowledge, unexpected faces to notice. In a well-studied phrase, Bishop Nifon, the same who had shattered my youthful faith, was conveying his paternal joy at seeing me back in the arms of the Church. Other remarks, just as apt or sincere, were pouring upon me from all sides.

The wedding luncheon followed, a seated affair for about fifty people, divided into two distinct groups: respectability, presided over by my grandparents, in the dining room, and gay and noisy youth in the lounge, where Jean and I acted as hosts. So high ran our mirth that when, glass in hand as bride and bridegroom, we went around the tables to be toasted and cheered by every guest in true Russian manner, Granny whispered into my ear, whilst I respectfully bent to kiss her hand, "Aren't you terribly excited over there for such an important day?" I eluded explaining we were just being happy, not riotous.

The greatest thrill of the day was still awaiting me. In the garland-festooned courtyard, peasants and tenants were dined and wined at three enormous tables where color and loud shouts reigned. I felt much more sincerity in the cheers and blessings they showered upon

their new *domnitza* than in the polished phrases of our social friends. I was visibly touched by the big, hearty welcome I received here and I hoped they saw it; but the heat was intense, my headdress stunningly heavy, and fatigue beginning to tell.

I bore it to the limit of my strength, then staggered back into the coolness of the hall where I almost collapsed. Faltering to my room with a sudden feeling of terrible loneliness, I tried to unburden my aching head of the gold entanglement covering it. My struggle was short. Jean was by my side, gripping me strongly in his arms, laying me on my bed, and ordering me to calm down. He would stay with me, and I need no more bother about anybody. My faint protests were disregarded, and, quoting Barbier's *Les Iambes*, Jean called me "*cavale indomptable et rebelle*," a remark he often repeated in years to come.

Exhausted guests were also attempting to rest or beginning to depart. The day was drawing to its end and in a blaze of heat, emotion, and joy. For a short moment I reappeared downstairs where tea and farewells simultaneously occurred. A bustle of cars, luggage, good-bys, and hugs, Granny's last kiss, saying, "Be happy, my child," and it was all over. Everyone had gone leaving us two in the large empty house. . . . Overwhelmed and happy, slightly distressed too, I was secretly conscious that the whole of my future would be shaping itself during the coming night. . . . Imperceptibly I shuddered. . . . The sunset's glory was throwing a crimson mantle over the sky, and we were alone together . . . for the rest of our lives. . . .

International Honeymoon

Les peuples heureux n'ont pas d'histoire" . . . and I was supremely happy. Unaware of the world, of no interest to others.

A wedding night may not be described in detail for decency's sake. A honeymoon might be a case of emotional discretion. I could, abiding unwritten laws, coyly skip both. Or venture to recapture the flavor of these happiest days of my life?

Technically, I was a virgin. This was by no accident, but because of well-considered principles of loyalty to a future, unknown husband, or perhaps a lingering respect for established prejudice. Besides, I was extremely young.

My family did not believe in sex education; the subject was never broached; no appropriate advice given. Yet unceasing gossip, not always intended for my private benefit, informed me in precisely the wrong way. And how could the daughter of a breeder, leading a free open-air life, sharing her father's anxiety when a mare was in trouble or a bitch in risk of going astray, remain completely in the dark as to the facts of life? No, I did not nurse the illusion that happy kissing or stork and cabbage were the origin of babies, but what my unguided imagination had elaborated was hardly more accurate than those fantasies.

Put to practical use, my conjectures proved well-nigh disastrous, sending my experienced husband into frantic, disabling fits of laugh-

ter that baffled me. Yet like a good fairy tale my story had a happy ending, and bliss presided over our lives during a beautifully long period, if not for ever and ever. . . .

This incident convinced me that experience in at least one of the partners is a boon to a newly wedded couple, and I never grudged my husband his previous amorous exploits. I was happy and that sufficed. Why query his past? Was not love, passionate love, replacing my hitherto affectionate and reasonable attachment? The violent exaltation of my feelings will somehow bar, for lack of variety, any analysis of the carefree honeymoon, which slowly evolved into a wandering yet settled happiness, mutual understanding, and maternity.

For several years we led the banal, sheltered existence of a well-to-do young couple without ambitions. We were no exception in a bygone world, so carefree and steady that the young people of nowadays can hardly conceive it. Perhaps, amid the fluid facility of passing days, we occasionally wished for some new excitement, called for the unexpected, accused of tame indifference the period in which we lived. We did not know our luck. When the unexpected occurred, it came as a rude awakening to a slumbering society, pregnant with turmoils and changes it had ignored. The term "war" held no meaning for us or, at most, only a symbolical one. Even to clever people horizons appeared clear.

My one regret is not to have taken at the time a more serious view of life and considered productive work as one of its major aims. But from the start busy leisure and travel had been our sole concerns. My only excuse is that we shared this rather superficial outlook with a great majority of our contemporaries in our own walk of life. None around us seemed to make or earn their money, one just had it as a matter of course, using it gaily and freely. So did we from the moment of our marriage.

After three perfect days of peaceful dreams spent in solitude at Maneshti and a few in Bucharest, we left on a honeymoon that was to

last two years. We were northward bound, because we wished to visit a country neither of us knew, rather than follow crowded, well-beaten tracks.

Norway's midnight sun was our aim, to be reached by meandering routes. Budapest's gay charm first arrested our delighted attention; then I made the sorry acquaintance of Berlin. The ugliness of the city could not be denied, and in spite of curiosity and adequate coaching I was not to be reconciled with such lack of beauty and elegance.

Decidedly Berlin was not to my liking and I have shed few tears on its battered remnants. The town's whole activity struck me as a program, a purely military and boorish one. Nowhere else did one meet a similar number of uniforms, heel clickings, regulations, and power talk. I remarked to Jean that this was not the lively modern city Germans proudly boasted of, but a magnified barracks where fun and pleasure were visibly intended for soldiers' solace and crude relaxation. Knowing other European capitals, Paris, Rome, Vienna, I found the difference *kolossal*, but not to Teutonic advantage.

I was beginning to form my own opinions, at least where outward appearances were concerned, and refused to be influenced by the lengthy and enthusiastic explanations of German politics given us by Jean's cousin, the Roumanian Minister in Berlin, Alexander Beldiman, Aunt Emma's eldest son. Otherwise a remarkably clever man, well-spoken and alive to international affairs, he was completely blinded by his admiration for Germany. I never tired of his informed conversation but his total allegiance to an alien country I could not accept, nor could I foresee that his Germanic roots had grown deep enough to induce him during the coming war to disregard his duty to Roumania, then fighting with the Allies, and siding with his country's enemies, to turn traitor. His once mentioning a future war as a quasi-necessity ought to have opened my eyes to Germany's terrifying aims, as I knew him to be *persona grata* with Wilhelm II, but I was too unaware of international pressures to grasp the significance of his remark.

Owing to their good position at Court, the Beldimans' Legation was a popular social meeting place. During our short Berlin stay a number of interesting and influential people were asked to meet us, but I took little pains to cultivate them because I was so eager to be alone with my husband and continue our happy trip that I could not make myself duly agreeable to casual acquaintances belonging to a nation I heartily disliked.

The various night clubs we assiduously frequented happened to be more in my line of discoveries, bringing forth some educational tips from my husband, a reliable expert on night life and drink. Had he not spent over a year shooting big game in African deserts, partly for the love of sport but also as a cure against too habitual alcohol? He had succeeded, yet could still drink enormous quantities of liquor without showing outward signs of unrest, except, perhaps, to become a little more talkative.

He naturally initiated me to wines and brandies, telling me without a smile, "A lady must be able to see herself through her first bottle of champagne without any trouble. With the second, dear, you must be careful."

Another time, on my initial meeting with whisky when I refused to appreciate it, declaring I hated this nasty smell, he remarked, "You'd better get accustomed to it now; it might come handy." Quite a sound remark, for in my future Anglo-Saxon life the acquaintance proved most useful.

This sealed our Berlin interlude, after which towns and landscapes fled, each entrancing or pleasant in different, changing ways—and so to Norway, our goal.

North from Oslo rugged mountains, rapid salmon streams, Stavekirkes, those ancient Viking relics, hiding their fine pointed steeples and minute sanctuaries among tall pine forests, and wild fiords, legend-breeding in the subtly suffused iridescence of their pale light and tones, replaced more conventional scenery, and we exchanged

rash vows of eternal love under ghostlike midnight suns instead of shimmering moonlight. What impish spirit possessed my husband when he chose in times of swiftly developing fast travel, to cross Norway from south to north in an ancestral, horse-drawn barouche, lacquered bright yellow and upholstered in faded red velvet, I can't imagine. But it turned out to be a most amusing drive, full of unexpected incident and incessant laughter, caused by our own happiness and gaiety. A second, soberer landau carried our maid and valet, who simply could not fathom their master's new whim. I was enchanted with all I saw and did, whether it was the unknown landscape unfolding, not a detail lost at our subdued pace; a surfeit of salmon boiled, grilled, or smoked, which we ate in every tiny spotless inn at which we spent our nights; reindeer; or my fruitless attempts at making myself understood in a totally alien language. Everything was enjoyable.

Picturesque and primitive, the fiord village of Balholmen lay in the lap of straight, lofty peaks, hazily blue, abruptly surging from the Hardanger's dark, occasionally very cross waters. In this minute resort I was for the first time faced with my husband's house-buying mania. I suppose his rather settled nature, as opposed to my vagabond instincts, hankered for stability, and he felt solid property might bind him to any place he fancied. But had we not already two family houses we systematically deserted?

In Balholmen I was still new to his enthusiasms and caught fright when, in front of a small, indifferently charming, and reputed haunted house, he suddenly exclaimed, "Here we are, this is perfect, the ideal summer residence. We must immediately inspect and buy it."

Astounded, little relishing the prospect of being tied to this remote, barely accessible although beautifully located place, I immediately retorted, "But, Jean, think of the distance, and all these enormous rocks threatening to fall on one's chest. They will give me claustrophobia in no time. Please give it up."

"No, no. The house is enchanting and quaint; we must have it. The hotel porter knows all the details, the price, and other conditions . . . and think how healthy for the children."

My anxiety gave way to laughter. Everything here belonged to the realm of fantasy: the house, his sedate desires, the children (I had not even commenced to expect one . . . and he spoke in plurals!) From then on I took his acquisitional mania as a joke, and how right I was.

Some weeks later a similar fancy seized him in Stockholm, or rather in one of this adorable town's suburbs, where a faultless property lured his imagination. This time I remained untouched, enjoying our prolonged station in Sweden to which my health compelled us. I was starting on a sad string of miscarriages, driving frantic my poor husband, who so desperately wanted a boy. Before I fulfilled his desire, we went on moving, planting our precarious tent in diverse places where I frequently underwent the house-buying scare.

Even in Cairo; during the winter, when sickness again prevented us from going farther south as planned, he found some dilapidated palace to tempt him.

"Look, darling, look at this exquisite Oriental decoration, all cut out and painted like tinsel paper, so flimsy, elaborate, and gay, and that huge baobab in the garden draws such fanciful shadows on the sand. Would you not like to own this Arabian Night's Dream? Let us have it . . . do say yes."

I knew the project would be stillborn. Jean was undecided, I self-willed, and Cairo perfect for three months of sight seeing, not long stays which would inevitably end in boredom.

Years later in Luxor and Aswan, the same story cropped up, but I was then familiar with my husband's changing intentions and knew we would never possess homes dotting three continents but would just continue to rent flats or villas when circumstances compelled us to a span of sedate life outside Roumania.

In gratitude for the joys of our honeymoon, we returned to Norway

the following summer to endure one of the worst heat waves I ever experienced. Cool evening breezes blowing from the fiords were a solace, not refreshing enough, however, to obliterate the danger surging from a differently burning spot on the map—the little port of Agadir in Morocco where the celebrated incident of 1911 took place. Kaiser Wilhelm's cruiser *Panther* served notice that the German nation would back its imperial aspirations by force. The diplomats took over and averted an open clash, but it was a warning to outwardly peaceful Europe of the war to come. Jean sensed imminent danger and I remember him saying, "Anne-Marie. A war is certain."

I was impressed, but it was too improbable. Jean always exaggerated, he was a pessimist. . . . Autumn winds drove the panic far away. We continued on our wandering course, and I once again refused to be solidly attached to a damp castle in Belgium, where my husband had taken me to recapture his bachelor's remembrances.

For five years he had lived in this country, under pretext of reading law—which he did—but also because its placid inhabitants and existence pleased him better than my beloved Paris, the only city where I really wished to own a *hôtel* to my liking, one happiness I never achieved, since Jean preferred it for hectic stays rather than a permanent residence.

Our Belgian pilgrimage was short and amusing. I met many stuffy people Jean was fond of, his numerous shooting comrades, mainly snobbish bores who could talk of nothing but game and wine. Admittedly they thoroughly mastered these subjects, but who wanted to hear about them? And there was the matter of Jean's love of visiting the haunts of his bachelorhood, outmoded hotels, and innumerable restaurants. He felt aggrieved at my indifference and lack of admiration for these spots, but in one respect, at least, I had to admit he was right: these places served food such as I had never tasted before—the best food in the world! No wonder my greedy consort had chosen Belgium as an abode! Meals in private houses were poems served in minute dishes, compensating for dull conversation. Besides, I had

YESTERDAY WAS MINE

I was beginning to grasp how independent my fiancé had been, since he came from such a stronghold of formality in accepting my free and unconcerned behavior—which was probably the greatest attraction I held for him.

Not until two days after our arrival was I to visit the last of Jean's relatives, his respectable, motherly aunt Emma Beldiman, whom I previously knew as a delightful, frivolous, not too clever, but warmly human old lady. Once again Jean warned me and showered good advice, but in this case I felt that heeding his counsel was unnecessary. She had a child's mind, and a benevolent heart.

Half satisfied with my flippant opinions on his respected aunt, Jean called shortly before noon to formally introduce me in my new status of obedient niece. Wearing my newest flowered frock and most perky straw hat, I climbed beside him into the open cab, driven by the best Russian coachman that semi-Oriental Bucharest could still provide. His wrinkled face, beardless as behove his *škaptzi* sect, he split from ear to ear in a broad grin when he saw me, and spontaneously exclaimed, "Good luck, *Conizza* [little miss] Anne-Marie. Kiss your hand. You're making a lucky choice."

Like all town drivers he well knew Radu Vacaresco's daughter, and before I had time to acknowledge this rather intimate remark, his long winding whip had lightly touched the two full-blooded Orloff stallions. They started full speed, their tails swerving, their well-kept manes flowing in the wind of their gallop. Our route lay from the distant *Chaussée* through the center of the town, swarming with summer activity. Appealing gypsy flower vendors lined the streets. In their rows of chairs at lively café terraces showy young officers in tight-fitting scarlet uniforms discussed whimsically and in detail the charms of the more or less professional beauties strolling past in flimsy attire—beauties visibly willing to attract attention, accept homage, or skillfully affect an air of pretended indifference. Why should a Bucharest shopkeeper bother to produce an elaborate window

heavy soil. Surely trees were better developed, more majestic than in other parts of the country, and it was through the secular Stancheshti forest of proud oaks, with a narrow border of pale birches growing on a high plateau overlooking the house, that my husband drove me to his family seat.

My arrival was planned in grand style, with music, dances, peasant festivities, triumphal arches covered in greenery interwoven with slogans and wishes of prosperity painted on vivid streamers. All very naïve and thrilling. So much pomp and respect were unusual to me, but very pleasing, and I tried to take most seriously my duties as lady of the manor.

Our visit was not to last long, however. I was now really pregnant, and Jean decided I should go to Switzerland and be placed under the care of Dr. Muret, a world famous specialist, who masterfully attended to the lightningly rapid appearance of my boy into a world he was to know so little yet so violently love.

So we settled in Geneva for several months. To Jean this was pure bliss, for he knew and loved the town from his boyhood and from cherished college memories and was delighted to find such a good excuse for a long sojourn. To me it spelled dismay. With clenched teeth and adolescent despair I had listened to the verdict exiling me for what seemed an eternity to a town I disliked. I have already said that my loves and hatreds for places are strong, and Geneva had never found its way to my heart. I must have given Jean an unsavory sample of my nerves when he chose Geneva for the important event I was looking forward to with mixed feelings of awe and expectancy.

Geneva's beauty, if any, I fail to detect. Carelessly planted on the low banks of Lake Lemman at its narrowest, less inspiring end, no architectural achievements redeem her resortlike aspect. Why should the blue waters of the broad Rhone lose their lovely color to the gray dullness of the Arve's cold stream? Why should the Salève, squatting opposite my hotel windows, be such an ungainly mountain, too high and too green, resembling an uneven slice of Gorgonzola cheese? Or

why should the Mont Blanc's inspiring peak obstinately refuse to grace the landscape with its white or glowing radiance? Thus it was: no use grumbling. Yet my loudly expressed opinions on this dullness of view and general boredom of the town—boredom, the unforgivable sin I never thought myself to abide—could not make me specially popular with the inhabitants, who granted me the kindest reception and hospitality, not for my own sake but because of the real affection felt for Jean by his many schoolmates and their parents.

I learned to appreciate this city of culture and tradition; her fundamental virtues: steadfastness in character, rectitude of judgment, and a high sense of duty could still be found among an oligarchy of ancient families once leading the Genevese republic. To the arcana of her history and past intellectual glories I was initiated by my husband who possessed a great number of books on the subject and made me read those he thought apt to stimulate my admiration. We attended some strait-laced parties in the surviving aristocratic mansions, where one was asked to "a plain cup of tea" at nine in the evening, arrived full dress to converse on obtuse subjects, and found the slightest hint of amorous gossip severely banned, and even the word "kiss" completely excluded. Those strictly closed Calvinist circles were so stern, one wondered how they ever produced children.

Geneva however also possessed a much gayer young set, deemed fast by its correct elders, and which we assiduously frequented. This was considered slightly strenuous for me, and with spring we left Geneva to settle in a large simple villa, pretentiously christened "Château de Sully," in the foothills of the Canton de Vaud at the far end of the lake, and conveniently near Dr. Muret's summer residence. There we were shortly joined by my grandparents, my father, now a widower and ever so often with us, the Paul Catargi couple, later my cousin Mic, now married and also expecting a baby. The family circle was re-forming around me, with the addition of Alexandre Callimachi, his wife and children. The blessed privacy and independence of my prolonged honeymoon was ending.

Clouds Are Gathering

*A*T the exceedingly slow tempo of life now enforced upon my natural agitation I had more spare time to myself than ever before. I had all leisure to dream away my happy days, but reading was my favorite occupation.

During those four idle months, reluctantly keeping to my bed, reclining in my boudoir or on the sunny terrace, in front of a view whose monotonous beauty I soon came to detest, I turned to books, never deceitful, eternally new. I am still amazed at the quantity of literature I then absorbed, its variety due to Jean's clear-sighted guidance. Our intimacy was still growing, withstanding two years of steadfast comradeship during which he had attentively, affectionately detected the gaps in my education or simply noticed where our tastes coincided; afterward we jointly drafted a long, rich list of books and authors for me to read, including modern German and Nordic writers I little knew and Russian literature of which I was quite ignorant.

In English we were equally well read, conscious though of our classical shortcomings, but greedily devouring all newly published novels, for which Jean had a capacity of quick perusal I greatly envied. His weakness for detective stories I scorned. They bored me, and I refused to debase Edgar Allan Poe by accusing him of fathering the thriller. . . . Whatever our opinions, we were decided to pay soon a prolonged visit to England—where I had not been—and naturally

to have an English Nanny to look after our child. In fact her appearance on the scenes was imminent. . . .

A few weeks later she stood in front of me—erect, slim, spruce, and tidy in her firmly belted navy-blue coat and velvet nurse's cap, showing neatly brushed-up, mousey hair. Above her white collar, matching cuffs, and belt starched cardboard-stiff, appeared her long, thin, ivory face; and I felt the straightforward gaze of her china-blue eyes regarding me intently through the gold-rimmed spectacles which I never, save in illness, saw her remove. Outwardly unruffled and unshaken by a twenty-four-hour trip Nurse Florence Mary Wilkinson, brought over specially from England to take charge of my yet unborn baby, looked eminently responsible and trustworthy, and so she proved daily during the eight difficult years of world turmoil and private tribulations she remained with me.

My first question naturally was to enquire about her health and journey.

"Thank you, Madam, it's kind of you to ask. I think I am all right, only a little tired. It's nothing. But I've never been abroad before. Everything seems very odd and different. But I hope—I feel sure—I'll be able to help with your baby, to the best of my experience, which is long and pretty considerable."

An audible sigh of relief must have escaped me on hearing her words. Here was the perfect British accent I required, the well-bred, soft, well-modulated voice that Nanny, under no stress or circumstance, ever raised. She also had the ways and manners of a lady, to the extent of never mentioning it in words, as is customary with so many in her profession.

I had, when making the complicated arrangements to engage a fully trained nurse, insisted on accent and manners, lest my child should develop into a little Cockney, or Lancashire lad, with dubious manners as an ultimate disgrace, even if health was well tended. No such risks with Nanny Wilkinson, true to a type and mission I always admired and which would deserve a special chapter in the his-

tory of British influence in Europe. Admittedly that influence spread only among the privileged, yet at the time, the ruling and powerful class of people.

Nanny reminded me of another representative of Britain whom I had also met recently. When very young, Miss Rebecca Paxton had somehow strayed into the wilds of Moldavia as governess for the three Callimachi girls. For forty solid years thereafter she had followed the fortunes of the family, first teaching the children, then packing them off to finishing school, and even finding a properly English and Protestant home where Jean could board while attending the Collège Calvin at Geneva. Her educational mission fulfilled, she had remained to help my mother-in-law through her husband's last illness and afterward to comfort her widowhood, and to become the actual backbone of the household and clan.

Of medium stature, well-rounded, with keen blue eyes, a reddish complexion, light gray hair severely pulled into a tidy topknot, Miss Paxton looked typically Victorian. She wore characteristic shot-silk dresses at night and in daytime beautifully fresh, white linen blouses and talked quickly and incessantly in several languages, none of which, except English, was comprehensible to anyone but herself. Presumably my adequate English explained the immediate and lasting sympathy she bestowed upon me.

Zénaïde Callimachi willingly allowed Miss Paxton to run her house and family, look after her affairs, drive her untidy servants mad with demands for British standards of cleanliness, order from London her widow's caps strictly copied after those of Queen Victoria, and choose the clothes and books for the family. But on English politics they clashed in an epic fashion that was one of the prized family tales.

The political arguments usually would occur in front of the over-mirrored dressing table in her immense stately bedroom. They would start while Miss Paxton, who stood for Gladstone and the Liberals, was helping to brush and pin the thick black braids of Princess Zénaïde, who openly favored Disraeli.

"Je vous assure, Miss Paxton, Lord Beaconsfield est un très grand homme. Il a fait l'Empire."

"But, Madam, you don't understand that Mr. Gladstone is much . . ." Indignation shook her whole body and a terrible jerk pulled the long hair.

"Mademoiselle—Miss Paxton—vous me tuez . . . Mais Disraeli . . ."

"I'm very sorry about your hair, Madam, but Mr. Gladstone . . ." and out would pour a torrent of abuse and indignant evidence that Disraeli was wrecking Britain. The quarrel would conclude amicably, yet without surrender on either side, to flare again on countless mornings, making Stanchesti acutely conscious of England and as loyal to that island as though it were a second homeland, and Miss Paxton an official ambassador of the Empire.

Unacknowledged and unknown, that army of English Nannies and governesses were truly backstairs ambassadors. They educated, nursed, and molded three generations of Continental children, gave them table manners, taught them their queer unpronounceable maternal language, put them to sleep with English nursery rhymes, fed their tender imaginations on *Alice in Wonderland*, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, or later *Peter Pan*, stamped upon their youthful minds faith in British invincibility and grandeur, initiated them to the joys of porridge, bacon, Christmas pudding, and helped or hindered their future understanding of the world at large. Never has their role been studied, their capabilities coordinated.

Had Herr Goebbels possessed such a weapon of penetration for his insidious ideas, he undoubtedly would have attempted to poison thousands of flexible young minds and had a try at the parents, too. As it was, overlooked and ignored by British officialdom their backstairs ambassadors remained a cohort of obscure free lances, unaware of the extraordinarily good work they were doing for their country. Intensely individual, full of personality, they nevertheless acted as a coherent body, an isolated, original group of unofficial envoys abroad,

stamping their habits and beliefs upon every manifestation of their ward's lives, thoughts, and connections. Intensely loyal, never assimilated, never conquered or convinced by anything un-British, they were a powerful influence in the families of the well-to-do.

One day I rushed to give Nurse Wilkinson some stunning news, say the death of the King.

Politely she answered, "Madam, I will believe it when I see it printed in black and white in *The Times*."

And right she was, my sensational news proved a fake!

Not only then was she right and strangely sure of herself, but also on her first day with me, after entering into the needs and requirements of the coming baby she prophesied, "A boy it will be, I can assure you, Madam, I am lucky that way. Anyhow, I don't like baby girls. I don't know what I'd do, should you have one. But I am positive it will be a boy."

A boy it was, a dark-haired, helpless, bright purple little thing, whose first sight horrified me for a short instant. After that glimpse at him I was ill for several days, and when I returned to normal consciousness, Nanny had completely and indignantly taken over, snatching my son from the hands of the Swiss nurse who had assisted me.

"A savage, she is, nothing but a savage, believe me, Madam. Refusing to bathe the boy every day and take him out into the fresh air. A real savage." From then on Nanny would recognize no authority but mine—who knew nothing about babies—and continued to find everything non-English wrong. Be it in civilized Switzerland, France, or genuinely primitive Roumania, all to her were savages or gypsies. . . .

My family had gone back to Paris where they now lived. Life continued very quiet, because I was recovering slowly and painfully feeding the baby. One night, tired of so much sedateness, my husband and brother-in-law took me for a regular outing and gave me so much lobster and champagne I made poor little Teddy very tipsy and violently sick. A three-months-old drunk, a baby losing control, is

the funniest thing I ever witnessed. . . . Not in my doctor's opinion, who sternly put baby on the bottle, to my secret relief. . . .

Autumn leaves were flying over the lake's disturbed waters, and I was eagerly looking forward to abandoning the surrounding landscape's unmitigated tedium. But Jean never took the initiative and I was too weary to decide. One sullen morning, while vainly yearning for a sunray to pierce the clouds, my husband flung his bedroom door violently open and, in dressing gown and slippers, brandished the well-informed *Journal de Genève* under my nose, "Anne-Marie, they've started. . . ."

"Started what? And who?"

"War in the Balkans, dear. Naturally I knew trouble was brewing in the Balkans, it always does. When are those little Albanian and Montenegrin states quiet? But I did not expect actual war. I imagined the Balkan Alliance was aimed at maintaining peace; now it has declared war on Turkey. I wonder what Roumania's attitude will be. All the others are in, Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria. Surely Foxy Ferdinand would enjoy trouble. . . . Have you any opinions, darling?"

I had none. In spite of the last years abroad, which had made me lose contact with my part of the world, all the political Balkan talk I had heard in my childhood suddenly flashed back to me.

So the Balkan kingdoms that had won their freedom with Russian help from the decaying Ottoman Empire had now joined together to wrest from Turkey the lands of Macedonia and Thrace? As an excuse both for this sudden revival of well-nigh forgotten claims and for this mass rising against Moslem survival in Europe, they had chosen a minor diplomatic dispute between Montenegro and the Sultan's weakened government of Young Turks. Obviously the proclamation of a Christian crusade by the little countries was an attempt to arouse religious emotions, and camouflage their nationalistic ambitions. The Balkan alliance met with little opposition; Russia was frankly benevolent; Italy tacitly approved; and Austria,

apparently tricked by this upheaval of Balkan Christendom, could have done nothing, even if she wished, because of her difficulties with her own Slavic, mismanaged minorities. Germany, naturally, backed her Eastern interests—that eternal chimera “Berlin-to-Bagdad” that haunts all German rulers—represented by Turkey. But Berlin’s faith in Moslem strength was strangely misinformed; for each new, barbaric name appearing in the papers, Dedeagatch, Tchataldja, and others, spelt a Balkan victory. Salonika, too, was soon in Greek hands. In complete bewilderment we followed on the map the advance of the conquering Christian armies, and before we realized what was happening the Balkan allies were at the gates of Constantinople and the war was virtually over.

Suddenly aroused from their indifference the Great Powers had intervened to avoid the fall of the Turkish capital and a peace conference had been hastily summoned in London. By the spring of 1913 the former allies were violently quarreling among themselves. As I remember, Ferdinand of Bulgaria had behaved in a very Imperialist Germanic manner—hardly excused by his being a Coburg—and his former partners were infuriated by his greedy and unfair claims, particularly as they would probably have behaved in the same fashion if they had dared. It was indeed a case of thieves falling out. . . . The probability of Roumania’s entering the new conflict became daily more obvious. Bulgaria was a disliked neighbor, and our government felt justified in raising the old, unsatisfied claims to the southern part of Dobruja, known as the Quadralateral Mangalia Bazargic.

Our return home was compulsory. Before leaving Switzerland, expecting the worst, I took measures to order all the necessary material and drugs to set up a field ambulance which I intended to present to the Roumanian Red Cross, reserving for myself the right of running it with imported doctors, at my own expense. A trusted friend and experienced surgeon, Dr. Lardy, who had previously campaigned in the Balkans, was to supervise the last details and accompany the bulky shipment.

On arrival we found Roumania at an indescribable pitch of excitement, and violently sanguine. One boycotted Bulgarians, called them hideous names, eventually beat them up in public places. The threats, wild gesticulations, screams, and noise in cafés or restaurants flabbergasted me. I had apparently forgotten my countrymen's violence and found it ludicrous and embarrassing.

As a lieutenant in the reserve, Jean was among the first to be called up. Yet however prepared I may have been, the General Mobilization Order came as a shock. He was immediately to join his unit stationed at Botoshani, a town five miles distant from Stancheshti, where I had intended to spend the time until his departure to the front.

We were leaving that very night on any available train. My Bucharest house was ready to receive the ambulance; Teddy entrusted to Nanny's tender care at Sinaia. Oriental confusion and yelling enthusiasm prevailed in stations filled with cheering crowds. Youths were joining their regiments, a flower stuck behind their ear, a minute bundle their sole luggage, hugged in laughter and tears by sweethearts, mothers, wives. . . . Whole villages flocked to give the boys a mighty send off. In thick clusters they hung from doors, windows, the roofs of carriages, awkwardly clinging to the running boards. Inside the compartments it was even worse; everything was invaded; corridors were obstructed; standing was a mathematical problem; sitting an impossibility; and I had a maid and two favorite dachshunds with me. What a folly! Yet my barking, yapping little dogs saved the day . . . or rather the night, by making themselves so insufferable that, at Buzău, a railway conductor unlocked for us a compartment reserved for some top brass who had failed to appear. We were safe for the rest of a crawling journey. Disentangling ourselves, in the morning, from heaps of drowsy humanity over which we had to scramble, we finally alighted on the Botoshani platform whence Jean rushed straight to headquarters to be faced with the news of his regiment's immediate dispatch to the Danube front. . . .

An hour later he came to take his farewell in the rather abandoned

Stancheshti house where I had joined his sister Ralloue. Things were moving quicker than I expected, and I was dumbfounded at being separated from my husband and marooned in completely inaccessible Northern Moldavia. Over a rapidly improvised lunch my husband had told me he was appointed aide-de-camp, or whatever one calls it, to his colonel; civilian trains were curtailed, telephones suspended, petrol short. He had no more time to look after me and was off to supervise the regimental convoy in which he had the right to transport his kit, his car, his horse, a large case of champagne . . . but not his wife.

With many recommendations to helpless Ralloue, Jean left me in tears and raging. What was I to do? My brain was in a whirl. It was my first emergency, and I took my predicament and this phoney war very seriously indeed. Distress bred initiative. A mounted messenger hastily dispatched on a twenty-mile ride to Léon Ghyka carried a letter informing him of my position, imploring him to lend me his legendary yellow car to take me as far as Roman, half way to Bucharest, where I understood some train service survived. Exhausted, I helplessly, hopelessly lay down. My vigil was short.

In the middle of the night the sound of distant hooting was heard and, in a rattle as of chains, the mechanical monster drove up, complete with a warm, friendly letter and an indescribable chauffeur, uncouth, unkempt, but willing and prepared for any enterprise. Exactly what I needed. I immediately packed up my speechless maid and sister-in-law, who refused to abandon me, but this time I mercilessly left the dogs behind. At dawn we were ready for such adventures as might come.

The car was obviously not roadworthy, and as its tires proved very gossamer, punctures and breakdowns were innumerable. With ingenuity and help we managed somehow to muddle through. The stretch to Roman, some fifty odd miles, took us six hours to cover, our slow pace bringing on an unforeseen incident. Stopped at a level crossing by the passage of a military convoy, I suddenly caught sight

of what looked like our motor and my husband's military driver. Gazing in surprise, but more intently, I actually saw Jean leaning out of a railway-carriage window, a vague, bored look on his face. At the top of my voice I yelled, "Where are you going?"

"We stop at Roman for lunch. Join us." He shouted back, roused from his drowsiness.

"We'll be there." I answered.

We arrived sharp on time for a tremendous reception, and to discover that civilian trains were a myth. Without hesitation or remorse I decided to drive on in Léon's vehicle and enjoy the improvised treat of this military lunch. The whole setup was incredible.

Stout, red-faced, and genial, the Colonel was the most savory mixture of downright vulgarity and good-natured simplicity. A hard drinker, full of jolly stories, he immediately addressed me as "little lady," and started patting my bare arms in the funniest all-too-familiar way.

"Grand, famous to have you with us. I did not know Callimachi had such a gay little wife. You must come on with us. Leave that ramshackle car of yours, board our train, I will deposit you wherever you choose. Lieutenant Callimachi, give the necessary orders."

"*Mon Colonel*, it is against all regulations. I suppose you are joking."

"Not at all; I mean it. The journey is so dreary without ladies. Madame," turning to my stern sister-in-law, "won't you honor us, too. By the way, a little more vodka would do you good, you are much too serious and sad."

"I never drink," came the shocked and somewhat embarrassed answer.

And on he went in what he thought a light jocose mood, really a paragon of Roumanian Blimpishness. All this over a typically provincial luncheon, heavy and greasy although excellent, as could be expected in this small town's forlorn railway-station restaurant, served in thick crockery and enormous tumblers by sweating waiters, among millions of flies which buzzed around and even accompanied the

food into one's mouth. Helpings were ultra generous; so was the lavish use of toothpicks, which baffled me.

My maid was being equally well entertained by the noncommissioned officers, but my latent fear was that my driver would get drunk and definitely impair the future of our expedition. So I energetically put an end to the proceedings, which were becoming too boisterous for Ralloue's bitterly tried correctness and my husband's waning sense of humor. I alone was genuinely amused. The parting reached grand proportions, with a number of extra toasts, the Colonel more and more excited, perspiring even more freely, and junior officers laboriously trying to emulate his natural gusto and cheap jokes. I kissed my husband and once again took the road, after sending Léon Ghyka an apologetic wire dispatched, for safe delivery, by the military authorities.

After a few hilarious adventures and a night spent on a billiard table, which I shared with my maid so as to leave the only available sofa in the crowded inn to Ralloue, we safely reached Bucharest. I immediately set out with a Red Cross official to find a building to shelter my hospital, since the uncanny tameness of the campaign seemed to exclude the necessity of auxiliary field ambulances.

A temporarily disaffected school was selected and Dr. Lardy, by now safely arrived, his charming assistant Dr. Reverdin, and myself started feverishly unpacking and organizing. All in vain, except for the relief of those two agreeable men's company, helping me bear the ordeal of my first separation from my husband. Failing work I gave them all the sight-seeing and nightly outings I could, and we commented together upon the unexpected way in which the Second Balkan War was unfolding. For Roumania it was an unglorious walk-over, with our armies ordered to stop for political reasons in sight of Sofia. All our men fancied themselves heroes, at no expense. There was no trace of casualties, but it was officially admitted that a serious epidemic of cholera was decimating the army's ranks; the death roll ran high; medical help seemed inadequate.

I was not unduly worried and went on dancing with young handsome Reverdin and listening to more serious Lardy. He was thrilled at being in an Eastern country that reminded him of his long stay in Turkey, and invariably started his sentences with a loud, "*Mash Allah*, my Princess, this life is good."

Once, however, this gay greeting was interrupted by unexpected noise at the door of my Chaussée house. Lardy rushed to determine its cause and returned slightly agitated, saying, "Don't be upset, your husband is just back." Why upset? Overjoyed, without grasping the rest of his phrase, I ran to meet Jean, only to catch sight of his heavy frame being carried up the staircase by two clumsy soldiers.

"What is it, darling?" I exclaimed. "Are you wounded? What has happened?"

His voice was weak but firm as he answered, "Don't be frightened. No, not wounded. They just think I am starting cholera and sent me home. It may be all right."

The shock was terrible and I naturally panicked. Lardy immediately stepped in, "If you get nervous, I won't let you near him. He needs rest. I guarantee to cure a mild attack, as his is sure to be."

My Swiss friend proved decidedly invaluable. With cholera it is death or recovery within a few days. Very quickly we knew where we stood; the scare was over; the war too, in my view. A week later we could transfer Jean to Sinaia for a prolonged rest cure, and my doctors, whom I considered his saviors, were taking their leave after what had turned out to be a mere holiday. My ambulance material was used for growing cholera cases and subsequently burned to avoid spreading infection. Another chapter of our lives seemed to have closed.

By the autumn a hurried peace treaty had been signed at Bucharest between the belligerents, whose negotiations I was too busy with my husband's convalescence to follow closely. Of her warlike venture Roumania derived some minor territorial advantages, a picturesque slice of coast with an attractive sea-resort, Balcic, and Bulgaria's last-

ing hatred. Everybody sang victory hymns! . . . I had been so shaken I saw no more darkness ahead.

Our private affairs settled, we were, in the fall, preparing to re-enter the merry-go-round of Western capitals. Vienna, steppingstone to the cosmopolitan kaleidoscope of Europe was to be our first halt. We would decide then on our future course. We intended to take a train at Sinaia, but the elements would have it differently. An early snowstorm blew its devilish whiteness at hurricane speed over rugged mountain peaks and into deep gorges, stopping rail traffic, cutting telegraph poles, blocking roads to any normal use. According to all appearances we were definitely stuck. Not us, however, if any human device could help.

Only one chance remained that might enable us to catch, at Brashov on the northern slopes of the Carpathians, an Austrian train that presumably was still running. Sleighs could carry us across the mountain passes and successfully outwit both nature's fury and the thick snowdrifts obstructing roads and tracks. A light fleet of sleighs was immediately summoned. Narrow and slight, lined with rough long-haired fur rugs; their tiny mountain horses harnessed in shiny leather trimmed with beads and red wool tassels, fox tails attached to their blinkers, and wide-meshed gaily colored netting covering their backs; those sleighs had a wizard quality about them.

By twilight, when the wind abated, we set out to cover the twenty-five-odd miles separating us from our goal. Slowly the heavy overhanging clouds began to lift, clearing spans of deep blue skies, emphasizing the lovely white vistas bordering our route. Passport formalities seemed endless. By the time we left the custom house, on top of the mountain, the moon shone brightly above the glittering slopes of the Tömös Valley extending at our feet. Moonbeams played among slim pine trees dressed in icicles like Christmas hangings. We were entering on the long, winding descent leading to the Transylvanian plain. Clear and silvery the night surrounded us, full of weird sounds and elfin visions.

Shiny cotton-wool blurred peaks and ridges. Their hooves hardly touching the thick clean snow, our horses seemed to fly. The fastest car cannot impart the sensation of speed conveyed by these feather-weight sleighs, racing to the erratic peals of harness bells, past frozen villages, red-roofed, the tiny houses clustering around their church as if to keep out the penetrating cold. Our inspiring night drive ended too soon for my taste when with clenched teeth and triumphant smiles we finally made our train.

Our Vienna stay was brief, unexciting, and enjoyable. Thence we moved on to Rome, where my brother-in-law and his family were spending the winter at the Excelsior Hotel, keeping completely to themselves as usual.

Since girlhood I have loved Rome with intense predilection and I still remain partial to this city's inexhaustible attraction. Baedeker in hand, I had already copiously sampled its sights, but I was prepared to commit innocent relapses any day. Jean was delightful in churches, endowed with greater perception of detail than myself, of a more leisured disposition too. Rambling around ruins and lengthy explorations among old quarters, gazing at baroque fountains or discovering curio and bric-a-brac booths in side streets, suited him well. I followed him willingly, slightly objecting to the slowness of his investigations which had enormous scope in a city of scattered and varied beauty such as Rome.

Rome, like Paris, whose last two spring seasons baby and the Balkans had made me miss, was dancing on a volcano, and the whirl was reaching top speed. Intense social activity reigned. The fancy dress craze was sweeping ballrooms with a wave of plumes, fringes, and multicolored tassels. Descriptions of the epochal Persian balls given in Paris by the Countesses Blanche de Clermont-Tonnerre and de Chabrillan, whose houses had been redecorated for the occasion, had been published all over European capitals. There Bakst and Poiret had designed the setting and costumes, with elephants carrying lightly

veiled houris or flimsily clad beauties in oriental garb, which had set a fashion.

Spurred by these tales, Baroness Blanc in Rome was reviving Egyptian splendors for the benefit of local quality and hibernating foreigners, such as ourselves. In spite of her daughter Princess Rospigliosi's alluring impersonation of Cleopatra and a few other glamorous costumes, I can't imagine that her Nile evocation equaled the Ispahan balls of Paris. Too many dull Egyptian burnouses concealed shapely male figures, and feminine apparel did not match looks, which attained a high average among the Roman aristocracy.

All these young couples we met were strikingly handsome and charming, but their historic homes rarely proved adequately hospitable. They much preferred to attend the fantastic parties given for their benefit by wealthy foreigners, frequently American, in some fashionable hotel. One of these parties given at the Excelsior was unsurpassable. The bands and the floor were perfect. The supper hall, decorated with garlands concealing millions of minute green bulbs, also harbored a number of semitrained little monkeys plus an emerald flight of cockatoos, lending a jungle aspect to an already oversexed atmosphere. The party instituted by the parents of American-born Princess T., married to the descendant of famous Roman bankers, was drawing to its end when I turned to a fellow guest and asked, "Ought we not at least to get introduced to our hosts?"

"Quite useless," casually answered young Princess Thérèse L., Belgian by birth, "they'll put our names in the paper tomorrow. That's what they want. Meeting us means nothing to them."

Regretfully we finally left Rome for a flying visit to Granny in Paris, after which we set out for my first, and long anticipated, trip to England. I fancied myself well informed and already familiar with British ways and habits but on arrival discovered that, except for the language, I understood nothing. When confronted with reality I realized that all my imaginary knowledge of the country was just a

schoolgirl deception. British life and mentality struck me as puzzling disappointments. I did not appreciate the people I met, and they returned polite indifference to my gushing approach. My unadulterated Continental upbringing and outlook misunderstood and misjudged everything. Diffident and disillusioned, I left after three months, with the curt verdict, "England is not a woman's country. And surely not a country for me. . . ."

But here again I was wrong. Unpredictable England turned out, years later, to be very much the country for me. With maturity and growing experience I made total amends, and have since spent the best part of the last sixteen years, six of them belonging to motionless wartime, in England.

At the time (during the brilliant spring of 1914) I followed with stubborn indifference the curriculum customary for visiting foreigners. In feathered headdress and full regalia, I was presented at court after the usual gathering at Claridges and the long pilgrimage through streets and squares. I went to Ascot, a few private parties, and Covent Garden, where a brilliant season was in full glory and Caruso magnificent.

This period has been portrayed by British authors of such verbal munificence I would not dare attempt to emulate them. Who could excel Sir Osbert Sitwell's masterly evocation of London's last season before the First World War? The scanty glimpses I then caught are not sufficient to justify an adequate appreciation of its specific charm and secluded atmosphere. "Belonging to the club," is not a vain joke, and the hour had yet to come when I would somehow be accepted within the realm of these supremely insular islands.

Reading *Great Morning* did not only conjure up melancholy or pleasant reminiscences, it filled me with an admiration, mingled with traces of envy, for such a buoyant "*joie de vivre*," trespassing the years and making me in retrospect regret my more *chagrine* nature, prone to look ahead in expectation or fear, rather than to taste fully the passing hour's flavor.

My last days in London, when our homing was already imperative and imminent, were stamped by an unexplainable spell of evil forebodings, quite unjustified at the moment. Political dangers weighed lightly on people's minds, so why should I, on a sunny spring afternoon in June have remained alone at Claridge's while my husband and his friend Neil Primrose—Lord Rosebery's youngest son and without doubt the nicest, most brilliant, and companionable young man I had met in London—had gone out on some errand. On their return they found me desperately sobbing, my head so deeply buried in my folded arms I did not hear them enter.

I suddenly awoke from my conscious nightmare to the sounds of Neil's shocked voice, "Now what's the matter? Anything wrong? This is very unlike you."

Stammering, I hesitatingly replied, "I don't know. I can't say what's the matter. Something terrible is happening to me, to you, to the world, to everybody. I can't say what, but everything's on fire. It's awful."

"Now, woman, where's your self-control? Stop this nonsense and get ready to come along for a drink." His tone and words, quite out of his usual style, sobered me, and I obeyed. The subject was not broached again before our departure, and nothing dramatic happened before we left.

In a matter of days the Sarajevo assassination shattered peaceful skies. I did not see Neil Primrose until 1916, shortly before he left with the British Expeditionary Force for Palestine, whence he never returned. Was it really the war and its turmoils I had subconsciously foreseen?

The Storm Breaks Out

WAKING up in a chapel is a weird sensation. I confess I enjoyed it each time I opened my eyes upon the vaulted ceiling, painted sky-blue, dotted with golden stars, and bound in ropelike brown moldings, of the room I always occupied at the Hotel Imperial in Vienna. Its octagonal shape and brownish yellow walls, scooped in places into rounded niches to enshrine saints' statues, was well in keeping with its original destiny—that of a private chapel in a large, quasi-imperial mansion, never intended for a hotel.

I was so fond of this palatial building, and especially of the chapel bedroom, that I had coaxed my husband into abandoning the more local Hotel Sacher he had favored before our marriage. Many decades ago a German princeling, a Wurtemberg, I believe, wedded to an Austrian archduchess, wishing to amaze court and society by the splendor of his residence, had erected this spacious house on the fashionable Kärntnerring. The new building shot up in inverse proportion to its owner's means. Ultimately, he saw the end of both. When the chiseled bronze key interlacing Wurtemberg and Hapsburg monograms was thrust into the front door's lock plate, the owner was definitely bankrupt and the place for sale.

A rich undertaker, Frohner by name, seeing his opportunity of catering for the quick rather than the dead, bought and transformed the palace, cutting halls to install bathrooms but preserving coats

of arms, dangling chandeliers, and baroque decorations. To these he added his own effigy, reminiscent of the period's retired butlers, complete with stiff white collar, and side whiskers adorning a benevolent, broadly grinning face.

I had stayed in this hotel when traveling with my grandparents, and in the exchapel I was awakened to a bright summer morning on the twenty-eighth of June, 1914. From the stately couch placed in the altar recess I could see sunrays playing on gilt edgings and stars, feel mildness in the air, and realize that a lovely, probably boring, empty Sunday was dawning for me. I have a weakness for set programs and felt at a loss about my unplanned day, when the telephone rang next door and my husband shouted, "The whole Legation staff are lunching here at the Imperial and then going to the races in the Prater. It's apparently a great event, the running of the Austrian Derby. They want us to join. Do you agree? We've got nothing else on?"

Naturally, I agreed; it seemed a perfect arrangement. The morning, however, remained free for a stroll around my favorite haunts. Soon High Mass would be sung in the coolness of the Stefanskirche, in which I liked to linger, admiring equally the inner and outward shape of this elegantly high and narrow cathedral, its slender spire surging from a roof dressed in multicolored tiles. The space around the Dom, the Stock im Eisen Platz, scanty and uneven, had its charms too, with at one end the old twisted woodlog covered in nails, after which the square was named. For centuries each blacksmith who was unable to unfasten the complicated lock, riveted and chained to the log, had hammered a nail into the rough surface, which was now a solid mass of rusty iron.

But the streets leading to the cathedral might make a dull walk. Shops on the gay, commercial Kärntnerstrasse would be closed. Anyhow they were no temptation after Paris and London, though always a thrill when coming from the opposite direction. The cafés, however, never closed, and it was fun to spy through these enormous

glass panes to catch glimpses of the agitated or placid inmates, feverishly gesticulating over their coffee and crescent-shaped rolls, or calmly reading a paper in front of a glass of beer and some manner of sausage.

Had I decided on this course, I might have later met my husband at one of the fashionable confectioners, Demel or Gerstner, packed for midmorning sweet snacks with buxom blond Gretchens, in flowered frocks, gulping iced coffee and eating immensely rich pastries smothered in jam and cream, accompanied by young beaux wearing too light suits and loud ties or smartly uniformed, heel-clicking junior officers. Occasionally the dark svelte beauty of some well-groomed Hungarian woman stood out in this background of buttercups, milk, and roses. This plan, too, I would give up for my figure's sake, in spite of the ironic interest my husband took in observing sweetshop audiences.

There remained the alternative of a drive along the Rings, the large avenue circling Vienna's center, shady at this hour of the morning, the glossy foliage of the large trees not yet tarnished by summer dust. This was my choice, and, quickly dressed, I stepped out of the hotel onto the curb where a long row of typical *fiacres* was waiting to take you, amid the constant babble of a talkative moustachioed *Kutscher*, at full speed to your destination. Entering the first available carriage was one's first reaction, yet, careful, Vienna conventions forbade your taking the nearest at hand. One might loose face if seen in an *Einspänner*, a single-horse cab spelling poverty and decay. Custom bade you to appear in a well-kept *Zweispänner*, its two horses effortlessly drawing the light weight Victoria in which you sat upright on stiff cushions, your legs covered in spite of the heat with a thin beige-and-red checked plaid sure to preserve your dignity in native eyes. One always might meet a friend or acquaintance!

Opera, Burgtheater, churches bordering my route, passed with the kind remembrance of some good performance or special service. Now I came to pompous Maria Theresa, sitting on her thronelike monu-

ment surrounded by the counselors and ministers she held dear or necessary in her lifetime. Behind the Empress's effigy the spacious museums unfolded their magnified proportions, sheltering some of the works of art and paintings I liked best.

In the distance I caught sight of the gray-lace spires of the Votivkirche, eternally under repair, but I was more attracted by the Hapsburg palace, the Burg, adorning the Ring with long perspectives of harmonious buildings still enshrining the myth of Franz Josef's occasional presence. It always amused me to watch the Burg gardens. Nowhere but in Warsaw's Raczinski Park have I seen so many babies in prams and carriages of all types, some playing in the alleys swarming with life and Sunday activity under the placid gaze of knitting mamas, their mouths continuously full of sandwiches or cake.

But this morning there was no time to lose observing fat mothers and bonny offspring. In a rapid whirl, my horses had turned right toward the towering prow of the Archduke Friedrich Palace overhanging an intersection of streets and now sheltering one of the greatest among world-famed libraries, the Albertina, cool, interesting, and restful.

Before rushing home I would, at the top of the Graben, have a short glimpse at its fantastic baroque pyramid, commemorating in flights of winged geniis (or were they saints?) seated on inflated marble clouds, the plague that ravaged the town in 1679 and was halted by some miraculous intervention of the Holy Ghost, to whom this tortured column was dedicated. But the time to rejoin party and lunch was nearing and I could not avoid changing into appropriate clothes.

One o'clock was striking when Jean and I stepped out of the lift in full Ascot garb. The lobby and restaurant of the Imperial were buzzing with elegant folk when our friends trickled in. Presently we proceeded into the large dining hall, that had formerly been an inner courtyard, and was now covered in yellow glass. Many racegoers were there, and our table happened to be alongside the one reserved

for the members of the Jockey Club, present in full force, carrying field glasses, discussing the possible winners, taking notice of the women filling the room. I could see Countess Auersperg's head of fair curls and her white *broderie Anglaise* muslin dress, the ospreys flaring on Princess Fürstenberg's hat. Disdainful of anything but sport and food, Baron Springer was energetically setting to tackle his meal, whilst his neighbor, in tightly fitting black hussar's uniform, thin-lipped, and monocled, was trying to worm some good tip out of this experienced race-horse owner.

Respectfully bowing, the maître d'hôtel was taking our orders. He was a live institution in the restaurant; I had always known him, and his diplomatic appearance was so reminiscent of a Ballplatz official that he had been nicknamed Metternich by habitués of the place. With sacerdotal unction my husband proceeded to order lunch, disregarding both the general public and the private quarrel soaring at our table. Food was sacred to him, and he was carefully investigating the menu for local specialties.

"We will start with *Forellen* [blue trout]. Are they perfectly fresh? Alive?"

"Yes, Your Highness, thrown in alive. The correct *truites au bleu*."

"You all agree, naturally," Jean carelessly added, then turning to Metternich, "After that a Vienna stew, *Rindfleisch*, or *Beinfleisch*. Which is the best today?"

"I would advise the first, it is excellent, but we also have a very special *Rosbraten*, with grilled onion, I can recommend."

"Oh, Jean," I interrupted, "I would prefer the *Rostbraten* to anything else."

"Nonsense, Anne-Marie, you can't smell of onion at the races. You will have the boiled beef with the rest of us."

"But, dear, they haven't given their opinion. You actually did not even ask them, you satrap. I want my *Rostbraten*, and I'll skip the onion."

Without taking further notice of me or the other guests, Jean went

on combining the menu. Our minor feud had temporarily covered another one occurring between Peter C., our counselor, and his wife on the subject of clothes. She had suddenly realized her simple black frock was not in keeping with the flimsy elegance of the other women's dresses. This could not do; she would this minute go home and change. Her raging husband taxed her with caprice, but she remained adamant—no efforts could calm her. A fight was flaring up.

Descending from sibylline heights Jean, looking her straight in the face, indignantly said, "Our lunch is very important, and you don't want that admirable bottle of iced Gumpoldskirchner to go lukewarm. Be reasonable, dear lady, enjoy your food. Then we will drop you in the Rengasse on our way to the racecourse, a car will collect you later, and we will not miss the first race. As for you, Anne-Marie, have your dish without the onion. I have ordered it that way. We end with a very special cheese and raspberries and cream. I suppose no one objects?" Had one, he would have taken no notice. Then turning to young Princess M., he began paying her tactful compliments, occasionally making polite conversation with another Legation official, Dr. Jurist Nikolaus G., a Roumanian turned Viennese, and a regular bridge partner of the Emperor's aged mistress, Frau Schratt, now living in complete retirement.

I checked my inner giggles at my husband's aloofness until, coffee and liqueurs dispatched, we joined our cars and the winding string of vehicles obstructing the whole length of the Rings and the lush central alley of the Prater leading to the racecourse. We drove at snail's pace yet arrived in time for the first race though too late for betting.

Little distinguished this racecourse from any similar one in France or England except that less smartness and lower standards in the horses' quality were to be found here. Only the zoo-cage appearance of the Imperial box was different from anything seen elsewhere. Or should I compare it to a magnified lighthouse, all glass and metal, holding its occupants in the limelight? Of the Imperial puppets on

show none seemed outstanding: stiff officers like any others and dowdy women, in spite of their exalted rank, pointed out respectfully as if they were demigods. The most noticeable person was the slim, parched figure of Princess Lónyay, the remarried widow of tragic Archduke Rudolf, attending with her present husband, the only one in the box wearing civilian clothes.

We watched the races, did our duty by the bookies. Then during the second, or was it the third race, a violent disturbance appeared to shatter the official enclosure. People rushed in and out of the Imperial box, messengers arrived, and suddenly the inmates of the cage prepared to leave in a mounting frenzy. Awe-stricken, the Jockey Club group was swept away by the storm. General agitation followed. Loud, still indistinct shouting covered the panting racecourse. One could hear broken phrases, "Murder!" . . . "Assassination!" . . . "Death!" . . . "A terrible drama!" . . . "Who?" . . . "What?" . . . "Both killed . . ." "Where was it?" "How did it happen?" . . . "Who? Where? When?" . . .

Reappearing on the front of the Jockey Club box the chairman made a brief announcement, "Owing to the assassination of the Heir Apparent to the Imperial Throne, His Imperial and Royal Highness Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his consort Princess Hohenburg, this race meeting is suspended."

I cannot guarantee the wording, but that was the general meaning.

Consternation reigned. All embassy staffs rushed for their cars, to be immediately available in their offices and wire any obtainable information to their respective foreign ministers. The growing noise was incredible as we followed the awe-stricken crowds hurrying home. The flight toward the city took the proportions of a riot; police were overwhelmed; diplomatic privilege of no avail. We reached our hotel late, completely bewildered.

In central Vienna, flags on the state buildings were already at half-mast; people were questioning each other in hushed tones; news-

paper vendors dealt out thin sheets of hastily printed special editions confirming the double assassination at Sarajevo without further particulars. Everyone looked aghast. Our Legation was not better informed than the street. A few details slowly began to trickle through; speculation ran rife. A bomb had been thrown; the murderers, said to be members of an irredentist Serbian group, had escaped. The charge of official Serbian support for the conspiracy was soon in the air, rapidly developing into precise, worded accusations. The Emperor appeared completely overwhelmed. No one foresaw what Austria's next political move might be. Whatever the results they threatened to be serious.

By nine o'clock the town was dead, not a theater open, not even a café. Half-empty restaurants served a hasty meal; faces bore frightened, mournful expressions. My husband's pessimism was complete. He outdid even the officials. In the warm evening air we took a silent stroll after supper to have a last look at the streets, when Jean, interrupting our walk warned me, "This means war. Almost immediately."

"Don't see things so black."

"Anne-Marie, I tell you, this *is* war. And I am not going to risk the child and yourself in any sort of complications. I don't want our last year's journey repeated during the Roumanian mobilization. Pack your things and be ready to leave any minute. Tell Nanny to do the same for Teddy and herself. I will make the reservations early tomorrow morning. Nothing can stop us from going, and the sooner the better. Any tragic development might occur almost at once."

The news was just as vague and dramatic the following morning. Black-rimmed papers carried gruesome descriptions and indignant comments of no political significance. At our Legation there was still little news when at seven that evening we boarded the train for Sinaia, where a hired villa was ready to receive us.

I may appear to put into my husband's mouth words unduly pro-

phetic for one little in the know; yet his, "*Ceci signifie la guerre*," rings in my ears after all these years, and I clearly remember the justifications he gave for his especially acute pessimism.

Our warlike Berlin impressions stood vividly in our memories. Ever since Agadir, Jean believed war practically inevitable and considered Franz Ferdinand the only levelheaded man in Central European politics. Killed under false pretences, for he was favorable to all minorities in the Empire, his loss appeared irretrievable. He had stood alone in his conflict with Franz Josef's waning brain and an impotent Government, torn by strife and intrigue, whose only resource was German power.

In spite of loudly expressed regrets and indignation at the Archduke's treacherous murder, Kaiser Wilhelm must have been relieved at his removal from the political arena in which he had acted as a brake. . . . No time was lost, and immediate pressure was brought to bear upon Vienna's ill-advised government and the vacillating Emperor to take drastic measures against Serbia, which was accused of plotting the downfall of the Dual Empire. My husband held the view that Austrian politicians, drowned in a maze of muddles and intrigue, thought a war—naturally a victorious one—the single way out of their desperate tangle of dissatisfied minority populations. On these views he based his apprehension of immediate and widespread conflict.

By nature a pessimist, Jean had fairly sound political judgment, yet events took some weeks to justify his harsh forebodings. During this time I was struggling with the installation in my uncomfortable villa and taxed him with exaggeration, hoping against evidence for some unexpected relaxation of the steadily growing tension, or a last minute miracle.

Naturally no one could overlook the angry exchange of notes between the Powers, extending a network of threats over European capitals. Yet one attached hope to each reassuring detail, such as President Poincaré's visit to St. Petersburg that coincided with the beginning of the worst crisis. I became quite exasperated with my

husband's daily comments over his morning papers, "This time it really means war. The Kaiser wants it and will have it—Obviously Bismarck's laurels spoil his sleep." Finally, I heard him shout, "*Ça y est!*" . . . It was the twenty-eighth of July, precisely a month after our Derby day in Vienna. Austria had declared war on Serbia. On the second of August the whole of Europe was ablaze.

We spent the period of crisis between our return to Roumania and the outbreak of war at Sinaia, where the Court was also in residence. This gave us an opportunity to meet all our national political figures, many private friends, and a wide sprinkling of foreign diplomats, rushing to and fro from Bucharest in quest of accurate news, or immersed in complicated negotiations.

Roumania's international status happened to be an unusual and awkward one. Officially no treaty bound the country to the Triple Alliance (Germany, Austria, Italy), yet it was an open secret that King Carol had vowed his personal allegiance to the German and Austrian Emperors and had privately guaranteed to bring his kingdom into any major conflagration alongside the Central European powers. His Prussian infatuation prevented his imagining that Roumania could default the agreement that he had entered upon without the Government's ratification. Perhaps he obscurely felt his pride might be affronted by the independence of his quick-tempered Latin subjects and for that reason willingly offered his mediation at the most difficult juncture of the Austro-Serbian negotiations. I can well remember that split second of mad hope.

His intervention failed, and we breathlessly awaited further developments. For once public opinion was freely expressed, showing the violent anti-German feelings prevailing all over the country. Popular opinion, however, would have been of no avail had the Government recognized the King's secret alliance, which was practically a family bond with no meaning or appeal to the nation as a whole.

After the general declaration of war the suspense became almost unbearable, and Sinaia was a boiling cauldron of passion and political

intrigue, most marvelous to watch had one been in an adequately detached mood. It is the historian's task to draw and analyze the subtle distinction between political facts and the individual or collective reactions determining them. Historical analysis is not a part of my personal story. In spite of surging details I will, therefore, limit myself to a broad outline of events touching on my deepest feelings and beliefs.

Within less than a week a dramatic cascade of ultimatums, war declarations, and unheralded invasions entailing all manner of bellicose reactions rolled over Europe. The tocsin rang its desperate appeal over France; England had taken sides; Russia was in from the start; but where did Italy stand? In spite of a binding alliance with the Central Empires she had not breathed a definite word, and all non-involved powers turned their eyes to Rome in a mingled spirit of expectancy and curiosity. The Quirinal's decision could mean much to the small and as yet undecided nations, and it was in this feverish, overwrought atmosphere that King Carol, for once doubting his uncontrolled power, decided to assemble a Crown Council to debate Roumania's attitude and fate. For the autocratic Hohenzollern that he was at heart, this meant a semiadmission of defeat.

Hourly changes and impressions were brought to my house by heated visitors, including foreign envoys, each of them typifying their countries of origin. There was cold, diplomatic Sir George Barclay, addicted to suckling pig and champagne, or explosively bourgeois Camille Blondel, eminently impersonating a whole class of French officials. Gushing, sympathetic, overpowering, and enormously rich, the Russian Minister Stanislas Poklewski-Koziell was an unexpected character even among Slav diplomats. His Polish origin and Roman Catholic faith constituted an exception to rules observed in the Russian service; his buoyant wit and tactless yet efficient behavior were added infractions of the conventions governing the conduct of statesmen.

In the opposite, German, camp the ambassadors were truer to

tradition, nursing higher ambitions because the Bucharest post, unimportant to Western envoys, was the acknowledged stepping stone to the greatest available positions in their own Teutonic countries. The German, von dem Busche, broke his back on his Roumanian job, and neither his intelligence, conceit, or bombastic bluntness could save him from utter disgrace. In contrast, Count Ottokar von Czernin, a picture of aristocratic incompetence and stiff arrogance, bounced straight from his Roumanian failure into the shoes of the Imperial Austrian Foreign Minister—the last. His blind steering of the Dual Empire to its doom may accord him a mention from posterity he otherwise hardly deserved.

Very different, and far more picturesque was the little Italian, Baron Fasciotti, whose vivid, shrewd personality cannot be dispatched in a few words. To Roumanians, “Baby Elephant,” as he was nicknamed, offered one great element of curiosity. He was that rare bird, an Italian Jew in office. To me he brought the continuous entertainment of his brilliant, accurate conversation allied to the extraordinary appearance his nickname so well described. Short, thickset, with a trunklike nose and keen little eyes, he lacked personal distinction, which his mind definitely possessed, coupled with great subtlety and a persuasive manner. At the precise moment I am referring to, his sibylline attitude was giving way to carefully planned indiscretion, foreshadowing Italian neutrality at an hour when it had not yet been officially notified, although a mere hint was liable to influence the decisions of Roumanian politicians.

The Crown Council was due to assemble on the third of August, early after lunch. I spent the morning using the little calm I had left to steady Jean and my brother-in-law, who was fearfully agitated. The whole town was in a similar frenzy, and a junior minister had been seen pacing, disheveled, the public park, repeating to himself, “A nasty mess, a nasty mess.”

Castle Pelesh was in a turmoil by the time the Counselors filed in

to face the pale old King, who opened the sitting by a declaration in French. This was considered proof of acute emotion, as he usually made the effort of using Roumanian for his official speeches.

Before he ended, Carol read his defeat on his Counselors' faces, but strained and trembling he struggled hard for his cause. He pleaded and begged to the best of his abilities, but, hopelessly outnumbered, had to recognize that he was beaten, probably for the first time in his reign of forty-eight years. Backed by the whole of the opposition except one member, old Germanophile Peter Carp, the young and energetic Prime Minister Jon Bratiano officially announced Roumania's neutrality, with a strong view to entering the struggle on the allied side. The date and hour were still undetermined, but indications were precise.

The two years of doleful neutrality I was to spend in Roumania had begun, with nothing to dwell upon but expectations. We had reopened our long disused Bucharest house, freely entertaining those friends with whom we felt in sympathy and agreement. In the capital I could witness delirious anti-German street manifestations, such as the rejoicings over the fall of Lemberg to the Russians, which coincided with a German semiultimatum requesting Roumania's immediate participation in the war with her so-called "allies."

Tidings from the Palace indicated that the aged sovereign could not recover from the blow dealt him by his kingdom's neutrality. The news of a French victory on the Marne was more than Carol's strained heart could stand. Acutely sensing the disaster that would overwhelm his beloved Germany, he died suddenly on the tenth of October. He was given a grand funeral, many speeches of official praise . . . not one sincere regret.

The same Liberal Government was immediately sworn in by the new King Ferdinand I, whose attitude unwaveringly remained patriotic from our national point of view. His beautiful Queen's influence was surely partly responsible for her husband's attitude, particularly in foreign affairs. That her friends and favorites became

powerful and notorious was, in my mind, to the country's good, and public opinion bore her no grudge. As Crown Princess she had been popular: as Queen she was even better loved. When, on the occasion of King Carol's funeral, she appeared on the Palace steps swathed in trailing crepe weeds and lovelier than ever, the crowd, forgetting the mournful occasion, burst into frantic cheers. It took firmness to silence the people, while quickly suppressing a smile she entered the state coach.

I was no eyewitness to the scene, but gathered this and other official or picturesque stories from Jean Duca, the thirty-four-year-old Minister for Education, with whom my lasting friendship was just beginning. Hailed as the future leader of the Liberals he was supposed to be trained and coached by Premier Jon Bratiano for an eventual succession to the chairmanship of the party. In later years this came true; at this time he was still contemptuously called "the pupil Duca" by sneering old Peter Carp, the number one pro-German. I was not born neutral. The very word shocks my ear, and the restraint imposed upon me by circumstances was odious to my natural impetuosity. It was my luck that Jean Duca, who was one of my husband's best friends, happened to be exactly the right person to help me solve my problems and occasionally soothe my irritated nerves.

I did not know him as a girl because Granny had set a ban on our meeting in spite of his being the son of an old acquaintance, belonging to the Ghika tribe. "No," my grandmother firmly said, "Lucy Duca's boy is no acquaintance for you. I don't want him in my house; he is a bad influence with his advanced liberal principles. You're quite subversive enough as it is. And I hear he's flirtatious, too!" Poor Duca, what a verdict!

My husband introduced him soon after our marriage, satisfying our mutual curiosity. Soon the solid bond of similar ideas and tastes made us firm friends and allies. A few months my husband's senior, Duca had a greater, more mature intelligence than Jean, a far younger attitude, and a gaiety I much enjoyed. My being madly keen on

politics created yet another link. Together we argued and fought against my husband's inherited conservatism, until we converted him to our creed and party, which he finally joined.

Outer circumstances helped our endeavor. The Conservatives and the majority of socialites based their pro-German sympathies on the fear that Anglo-French victory meant left-wing threats and revolutions; the Central Empires, on the other hand, were aristocratically reliable. My husband was pro-Allied, as myself, and this spared me the distasteful ordeal of entertaining people whose insidious propaganda shocked me deeply.

How difficult Queen Marie's position must have been! British born, she maintained her stubborn faith in Allied victory, however discouraging the static tempo of trench war could be to those hankering for rapid results.

Yet the Queen dutifully continued dealing out smiles to both sides, attending legation parties of both camps, when all the time she, in agreement with her counselors and the Government, was working out the means of Roumania's entry on the Allied side. Except for compulsory receptions she emphasized the mourning for the late King and kept to the inner circle of her devotees. The threatening epithet of "*camarilla*," so often branded upon royalty's entourage, was naturally uttered—very unfairly in this specific case—and was caused by jealousy in many a heart.

Later, in Carol II's case, the criticism was justified, for his officials worked for their own benefit, not that of the country. With Marie and Ferdinand things were entirely different. Their *camarilla* plotting, if the ugly word must be used, brought Roumania victory and happy expansion. In fact, so overpowering was his mother's personality that Carol was nowhere in the news. During these years he was merely a young officer obscurely finishing his military training, and expected to take interest only in his regiment. He was rarely seen accompanying his parents and was supposed to hate Prince Stirbey, the dearest and most influential of Queen Marie's friends. She was almost daily

at the Stirbey house, in Buftea, ten miles from Bucharest, where I don't remember ever seeing Carol. His flirtation with Zizi Lambrino, his first secret, afterward annulled, wife, must have started then. I was not aware of this story; I only heard it mentioned when I was already abroad with my husband on his war job of liaison officer between our military missions of Paris and London.

Our journey across Russia from extreme south to St. Petersburg, where we stopped for an unforgettable fortnight; our trip to England by way of Finland, Sweden, and Norway; my war experiences in Paris; and the fascinating period of the Peace Conference (1919)—to which Jean was attached as a minor official—are all part of future developments and maybe another installment of my remembrances.

Never moderate in any respect, I had daily struggles to remain tactful and keep my feelings and beliefs from becoming too obvious. Everyone, even the smallest cog in the machinery, was supposed, during these years of Roumanian neutrality, to trick the Germans, who otherwise might have invaded without warning, as was their usual habit, whether in 1914–1918 or 1939–1945.

The usual scene in my house was Granny knitting; me smoking and drinking continuous black coffees; my father, Jean, and Duca or other close friends pacing the room, sitting for a second, jumping up again in heated discussion, eternally over the same subject—Allied victory and our participation in the war. This picture stood true for all Roumanian homes, where feelings ran high, whatever their political allegiance. From the little I can judge, our passions can only be compared to what I have sensed of American emotions before and during the Civil War. Remaining aloof was almost a physical impossibility.

Meanwhile, in his spare moments, Duca proved a marvelous companion, amusing, knowledgeable, gay in everyday life, very thorough in his work. Thin and agile, his pince-nez trembling on his little nose, his expressive face clearly showing his admiration or emotion in front of some beautiful crucifix or precious ikon, he made me visit distant monasteries, less known Byzantine churches where sometimes

curious illuminated Bible pages were to be found, or simply a remote graveyard in quest of forgotten historical tombstones. All religious monuments came under his ministerial jurisdiction much to my enlightenment and pleasure.

Other times with his gift for mimicry and talent to extract fun from even the gravest events, he described old King Carol's funeral complete with nasal church chant, or the comic side of a serious cabinet meeting, or, better even, what was happening at Buftea, where history was in the making and important protagonists gathered under color of country relaxation. Queen Marie was constantly there, often the whole day in a riding habit to justify her presence. Thus dressed I once saw her remain for dinner with the King, important Allied envoys, and the Prime Minister (married to Barbo Stirbey's sister) later casually dropping in. After the meal they disappeared one by one into a secluded sitting room for a meeting to be kept secret from spying ears. The whole procedure had a flavor of Eastern mystery I much enjoyed.

Once Duca told us without winking that Jon Bratiano, the Prime Minister, was prone to solving serious international problems or pondering major decisions, lolling on one of the large Buftea leather sofas, his dark Oriental gaze lost in vacancy, a book of the *Bibliothèque Rose*, those classics of French infancy, held in his right hand for negligent perusal.

"Small wonder," Duca added, "conventional German diplomats cannot conceive a man planning a declaration of war while indulging in the Countess de Ségur's children's tales!"

Meantime, my beloved Granny had been taken to Paris by her three daughters, to attempt a radium cure for the terrible, relentless illness she had lately developed. I was heartbroken to see her go, hopelessly separated by the war and thousands of unbridgeable miles, but my duty, and heart too, were with my child and husband. Jean was liable to military call-up at any time. I had vaguely broached the

subject of a departure to Duca, and even to Mr. Bratiano, Granny's friend, but without much hope.

With mixed feelings of joy and anxiety, therefore, I listened tensely to Duca, who had come over to Sinaia one boiling August day of 1916, to tell us under oath of secrecy, that the Prime Minister, probably perusing *Les Malheurs de Sophie*, had made up his mind: the great day was approaching very soon indeed. Another surprise was in store for me. My intervention with the Prime Minister had miraculously worked and his message was transmitted to me verbatim, "Tell Anne-Marie Callimachi that for Madame Vacaresco's sake, and hers too, I am sending her husband on a mission to France. She did a wise thing bringing him into our party. I hope he will do good work, and I will see him before he leaves for some private instructions."

A gift or a bribe? Never mind, I was overjoyed, even if pangs, or maybe envy, surged for the friends we left behind. Roumania was entering the conflict at a time when the Allies were suffering setbacks in Salonika, and her intervention might ease the pressure born upon their armies, and perhaps also create a happy diversion in France, where once again the cabinet had resigned.

The day of general mobilization came for my country and the time for me to pack, close my house, and follow my husband's fortunes. My eyes hopefully fixed on the future, I had no time nor reason to consider the past. Little did I realize that not only an important section of my life was closing behind me, but that for the whole world, in spite of victory, a new era was opening pregnant with revolutions, wars, and turmoils that none could then foresee.

Looking back in a melancholy mood and in the light of long experience may be interesting; it is not constructive. One ought to face the future with the bland mind of an eager child, unprejudiced, ready to court adventure and courageously take one's risks. May all the yesterdays that were mine, more numerous than I have mentioned, not blunt my few tomorrows.

highly individual members of Roumanian and European society. There was Prince Léon Ghyka, who followed the woman he loved with gypsy bands and threw huge parties which she never attended; there was Crown Princess Marie, "all lace and laughter." There was the time when Anne-Marie's own father made the fatal mistake of boarding the Orient Express for Paris accompanied by his mistress, a valet, two maids, three poodles, and four horses, only to find his fiancée already aboard.

Later, as a wealthy and much-sought-after heiress, Anne-Marie endured the strange activities of the international marriage market. Finally, in Biarritz, she proceeded to arrange her own marriage to suit herself.

IN YESTERDAY WAS MINE, Princess Anne-Marie Callimachi tells of the loves and scandals, the uninhibited goings-on of the aristocracy, and gives a charming picture of a young girl growing up in the most lavish of lost worlds.

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YESTERDAY WAS MINE is filled with delightful stories of the colorful and